

**(Re)Envisioning autonomy: Neo-liberalism,
performance-based school management and the development
of ideal global citizens in Taiwan**

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ABSTRACT

Within a neo-liberal world polity, the concept of autonomy is increasingly perceived as conducive to postmodern nations' rational progress in developing knowledge societies. In accordance with global trends, the Taiwanese government implemented a policy of performance-based school management in 2005 to enhance educational accountability, efficiency, equity and quality. This autonomy-based reform perceives all educational stakeholders as self-interested, utility-maximizing market egoists who are capable of realizing their maximum potential by ceaselessly making consumer-style choices. The government assumes that the provision of choices will give everyone an equal chance of educational success.

The negative socio-political consequences brought about by the adoption of neo-liberalism's beliefs and practices have been explicitly acknowledged and illustrated in the literature. Nonetheless, the ways neo-liberalism has affected Taiwan's socio-educational reality have scarcely been acknowledged or examined, and even on a theoretical level there has been little thought given to the provision of alternative socio-educational possibilities. Thus, this research, grounded in the context of Taiwan, analyzed neo-liberal ideologies to discover their implications for socio-educational practices. Moral and philosophical insights from various theorists were synthesized and advanced as a substitute for neo-liberalism.

This research was based on the method of deconstruction and reconstruction of textual discourse. For deconstructive analysis, the aim was to investigate and problematize how certain neo-liberal values have come to be globally/nationally institutionalized, and utilized to manipulate citizens' consciousness for the maximization of economic efficiency, productivity, and profitability in the education market. The reconstructive synthesis, then, aimed to initiate possible socio-educational changes through reconceptualising these same values in respect to Taiwan's contextual specificity.

Overlooking the need to address neo-liberalism's belief in individualism, inequitable socio-economic structures and monistic, decontextualised and mechanistic epistemology, the Taiwanese government's promotion of autonomy was found to perpetuate socio-economic inequalities, power imbalances, human monism and intellectual inflexibility in education.

A shift in epistemology wherein autonomy was reconceptualised as "heteronomous autonomy" was found to be capable of reorienting the overall frame of democratic

reference towards a communitarian paradigm that would contribute to greater social equity and solidarity. This finding is extremely important as heteronomous autonomy takes human diversity as its foundation, so the emphasis changes from the rights of the individual to the self's unconditional responsibility to and for differences. Thus, a heteronomous-autonomy-based education would forsake neo-liberalism's standardized pedagogical approaches in favour of a creative framework-in-context. Committing to increased democratic justice and social intellectualism, this alternative education model has more capacity to transform Taiwan into a true knowledge society, where a high level of social cohesion is an absolute precondition.

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Chapter One:

INTRODUCTION

Within a neo-liberal world polity, all socio-educational problems can be solved by a reductionist episteme of economic rationalism. From this worldview, Kirkpatrick, Katsiaficas and Emery (1978) have argued, social reality is not understood as the composition of “changing living human relationships” (p. 9), but as the “naturally-given ‘laws’ of [global] capitalism” (p. 6). Such international laws that function rationally for economic benefit impel postmodern nation states to ponder their governance strategies in order to make so-called human progress, that is, the effective shift of the society to a knowledge-based (lifelong) learning economy. In accordance with global trends, the Taiwanese government now implements its *Performance-Based School Management* policy (MOE, 2007a) to replace its traditional governance philosophies of totalitarian bureaucracy and rigorous surveillance with a more humanistic approach, based on rational and autonomous self-managed institutions and self-determined agents. An autonomized society assumes that the empowered individual actors are capable of achieving *self*-actualization by perpetually adapting their cognitive understanding, seeking (lifelong) learning opportunities, and making consumer-style choices. It assumes also that “quality” in education will be realized through the choices provided to, and the decisions made by, the parents and students (CER, 1996; Chen, 2009).

In neo-liberal contexts, *choice* is portrayed as being equally available to all individuals and dependent on their autonomous decision-making in exercising their citizenship (CER, 1996; MOE, 2006c). Thus, the educational success or failure of individual institutions and their respective participants is divorced from the government’s responsibility and transferred to

individuals' faculty of choice (CER, 1996). While this autonomy reform is argued by Olssen (2010) and Strhan (2009) as encouraging competitive, possessive individualism at the expense of diverse human subjectivities, social collectivism and just equality, the development of students' critical literacy, democratic skills, and ethical-political agency is sabotaged further by a new instrumentalist (English) curriculum that narrowly focuses on the imparting and acquisition of utilitarian skills and vocational knowledge (Freire, 1998a, 1998b; Hyslop-Margison & Armstrong, 2004). There is therefore a need to examine and critique neo-liberalism's structures, beliefs and practices. This research project, by theoretically analyzing official documents, aims to explore the ideological manipulation of education in Taiwan, the contradiction between autonomy and control, and the material effects of the reform policies as well as alternative conceptualizations of "autonomy". The study also examines pedagogical approaches as a way of actualizing education quality – quality in the sense that the commitment to diversity, equity, equality and criticality are no longer rhetorical verbalism, but realized in and throughout a more just and responsible education.

The Chapter Structure

This introductory chapter is divided into five sections. The first section will introduce the research methodology, and the second section will give an overview of the selection of international/national policy documents. The third section will provide a concise retrospect of education in Taiwan, specifically in relation to the teaching of English. The reason for this focus is partly that the central government, since the mid-1980s, has placed exceptional emphasis on the importance of English language education as a means to better prepare the nation for an increasingly economically-globalized world. I have also taken this approach because of my intrinsic interest as an English teacher in Taiwan. Through the brief retrospective examination of education in Taiwan, the way the state's education has been

subject to political influence and economic circumstances will be demonstrated. In addition, attention will also be paid to the inextricable relation between Chinese cultures and Confucian traditions, and the state's conventional educational objectives and philosophy. The fourth section will identify the structural impediments anticipated by the state to providing a critical, responsible education. Local researchers' empirical data will be employed to disclose how the neglect of structural issues perpetuates educational inequality and social hierarchy. The problem of educational underperformance will thus be argued to be not a question of lack of consumer choices or autonomy, but essentially a question of structural omission. Finally, the fifth section will introduce the overall thesis structure and research questions.

Methodology

The methodology and theoretical framework of this thesis is based on critical theory. Grounded in the principles of dialectical logic, critical theory rejects any reduction of epistemology and recognizes that truth is neither a given reality, nor is it an agglomeration of the fragmented facts (Kirkpatrick, Katsiaficas & Emery, 1978). Truth, instead, lies in our praxical attempt to critically reflect on how a reality comes to be established, and the ways it is shaped by multi-layered, interactive (political, economic, social, cultural) systems in order to reconnect the established reality with human value and to critique it within the socio-historical-cultural context in which it is being produced.

Believing that a status-quo position makes it impossible to bring human freedom, critical theorists resist the existing capitalist system of "rational" domination, exploitation and dehumanization by subjecting the consciousness to oppression (Kirkpatrick, Katsiaficas & Emery, 1978). For example, neo-liberal belief, in which socio-educational reality is scientifically explainable and objectively measurable, reduces humans to mere abstract

beings and their complex experiences to a few quantifiable numbers. Critical theorists, in contrast, would be thoroughly political-historical when interpreting and/or analyzing social phenomena because it is humanity rather than economy (functioning through scientific, neutral laws) that is understood as the centrality of a society, and because the formation of a society is comprehended as a totality, irreducible to a single dimension of market and rational egoists.

Consequently, policy developments in this thesis will be examined via critical discourse analysis – the deconstruction and reconstruction of the policy texts. Guided by a moral and emancipatory interest, critical discourse analysis adopts Saussure’s materialist theory of language and thus recognizes how policy texts are the “authoritative allocation of values” (Prunty, 1985, p. 136), constructed as determinate representations within a particular historical, political context to inscribe certain subjectivities, while excluding others. From this materialist view of language, text, or more broadly discourse, is understood not merely as an instrument of communication, but as “an instrument of power” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 648), being exercised through what Gramsci terms “ideological hegemony” (cited in Codd, 1988, p. 242). In other words, policy texts are inherently political-ideological because they are an unconscious, normalizing system of representations which serve to effect real changes in social cognition in order to maintain relations of domination.

Consequently, my task as a critical policy analyst is to deconstruct textual discourse by moving beyond what is said to the act of saying it, to disclose how policy texts’ dominating ideologies support the perpetuation of capitalist modes of production and consumption by disregarding substantial contradictions, structural omissions and material effects (Codd, 1988). The aim is to explore and problematize how certain values, such as autonomy, self-management and lifelong learning, come to be globally/nationally institutionalized,

utilized to domesticate human consciousness and to either advantage or disadvantage certain social classes. In addition, the reconstruction of the deconstructed textual discourse will also be examined. The same values will be carefully reconceptualized in respect to the specific cultural-historical context of Taiwan, with the hope of inaugurating possible progressive social changes towards a more democratically humanized society.

The Policy Selection

In this thesis, international and Taiwanese policy documents are selected according to their relevance to Taiwanese industries' and education's structural changes in the postmodern era. The chosen documents are used to support my chief argument of Chapter 5 in terms of the domination of a neo-liberal world polity which not only practises (economic) globalization from above, but also isomorphous socio-economic policies on the global/regional/national levels.

Originally, the Taiwanese official documents were to be selected in accordance with Performance-Based Education themes. Nevertheless, after carefully searching through both online websites of the Ministry of Education as well as the Council on Education Reform, I surprisingly discovered that the policy of *Performance-Based School Management* is only briefly discussed in the Council on Education Reform's *Final Report of Educational Reform* (1996) and the Ministry of Education's *Educational Reform in Taiwan: Retrospect and Prospect* (2007a). Due to insufficient information, I decide to select other available policy documents according to their relevance to neo-liberal themes so as to better illustrate how the central government's belief in neo-liberalism has transited from the earlier Second Way to the Third Way.

The Taiwanese government specifically emphasizes the importance of English language education in this reform, but there were too few documents available to afford an in-depth critique. Accordingly, the *National Curriculum Guidelines for Senior High Schools' Compulsory English Subject* (MOE, 2011a) is used as the primary supplementary material when analyzing the main policy documents listed above.

A Retrospective Examination of Taiwan's English Language Education and its Underpinning Philosophy

Four years after regaining independence from half a century of Japanese colonization from 1895 to 1945, Taiwan was occupied by the Nationalist Government Kuomintang (KMT) who retreated from mainland China and mandated Mandarin (as opposed to Taiwanese and Hakinese) as the only official language allowed for communication in both the public and private spheres. During the period from 1949 to the mid-1980s, educational institutions were utilized as a mere instrument to implement political policies for the control of society (Hwang & Chang, 2003). Rigid centralization allowed the Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Compilation and Translation (NICT) to decide exclusively on all educational affairs, including the structure of the education system, and the standardization of national examinations, the curriculum, textbooks and pedagogical approaches (MOE, 2007a). Similarly, the 1968 introduction of English language education, to be taught from grade 7, was also the sole decision of the central government. With regard to the official curriculum, strict government surveillance was implemented to ensure teacher fidelity in transmitting the dominating ideologies of the state. Deeply influenced by Chinese cultures and Confucian traditions, the primary educational objectives were to develop students with certain subjectivities, encompassing behaviour attributes of compliance (to both authority and parents), loyalty, patriotism, diligence and discipline (MOE, 2007a).

The accompaniment of a totalitarian administration was authoritarian educational discourse, which in turn helped establish a very unequal power relation between teachers and students. Students asking questions and participatory practices within such a learning milieu were deemed as disrespectful conduct, given teachers' unchallengeable knowledge and rightful authority. As the Ministry of Education explains (2007a), successful English language education prior to the year 2000 was largely dependent on teachers' direct transmission and students' rote memorization in order to gain linguistic competence, namely, rigorous grammatical knowledge and accurate phonetic spelling. The state's banking model of education ushered in successive disputes regarding whether or not it was informed by Confucian educational philosophy (Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Kim, 2003; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Ng, 2000). Although there is still some disagreement, there does seem to be evidence that Confucius promoted banking education to a certain extent. In the *Analects*, for example, Confucius (2000) says: "I transmit [wisdom] but do not create" (7.1), whereas the students are as "jade sacrificial vessel[s]" (5:4).

Thus, we may assert that learning for Confucius (2000) is a passive process of accumulation, memorization and retention of information, independent of active and critical participation in the forms of inquiry, deconstructive analysis and reconstructive synthesis. As the predominant philosophical grounding for the state's education, the Confucian model of teaching and learning is in fact not incompatible with the Western model of memory or theory of information-processing proposed by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1969) (see Figure 1.1). This model of memory presumes that the meaning of knowledge is attached in itself, so the task of teachers is reduced to nothing more than direct knowledge transmission. Such an interpretation-free, supposedly objective education sees students as mere empty receptacles

who need to be filled with (dead) knowledge, through memorizing and recollecting particular information in order to perform well in the standardized national examinations (MOE, 2007a).

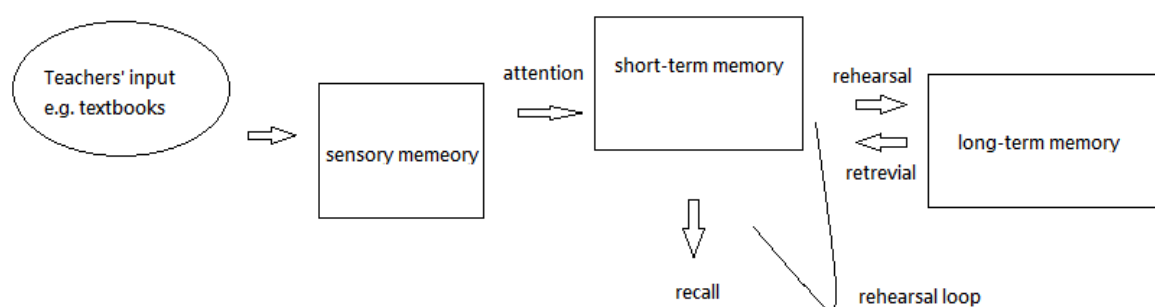


Figure 1.1 Atkinson and Shiffrin's Model of Memory (1969, cited by Mcleod, 2007, n.p.)

The state's governance and educational philosophy had nevertheless undergone drastic changes from the mid-1980s onward. These changes are largely associated with the national capitalist needs for decentralized management (as it created more optimal market conditions) and English-speaking instrumentalists, manifested through a series of new policies: the 1985 abolishment of the ban against the establishment of private schools (MOE, 2006f), the 1999 introduction of the *One Standard, Multiple Textbooks* policy (MOE, 2007b), the 2000 implementation of the *Multiple-Channel Entrance System* policy (MOE, 2007a), the 2001 compulsory introduction of English as a subject in the fifth instead of the seventh grade, and then in the third grade four years later (Su, 2006), the 2005 designation of English as the state's quasi-official language (GIO, 2005) and the 2005 *Performance-Based School Management* policy (MOE, 2007a).

In relation to the *Performance-Based School Management* policy (MOE, 2007a), the centre¹ replaced the conventional focus on grammatical accuracy in English teaching with

¹ In this thesis, the word "centre" is used to represent the central government.

communicative fluency (MOE, 2011a), to support Taiwan's position globally in commerce and politics (Her, 2007). English language teachers are discouraged from practising conventional teacher-dominated instruction in favour of a student-centred focus. A student-centred pedagogical approach requires English language teachers to employ diverse, practical material to address the specific learning needs of individual students, as well as their ability to "think-outside-the-box" (MOE, 2007b, p. 1). The Government Information Office (2011) explains that these educational changes are meant to shift the traditional "priority of national and social interests, as well as the importance of the group...toward [the] development of the individual" (p. 4). At the same time, these changes, as the MOE (2007b) continues, are meant to transform the state into "a free [commercial] society with a western-style democracy" (p.4), where personal autonomy, choice and needs in teaching and learning are no longer compromising to the totalitarian, heteronomous determination.

By replacing authoritarian bureaucracy and rigorous surveillance with a more humanistic, self-governing approach, the Council on Education Reform (1996) and the Ministry of Education (2006f, 2007a) believe that rational, autonomous self-managed institutions and self-determined agents are capable of effectively solving the postmodern problems of institutional/student underperformance and the increasing numbers of unemployed graduates resulting from the mismatch between school curricula and industrial needs. The underlying assumption is that the empowered individual institutions/actors, through their continuous economic calculation and/or consumer-style choice making, will better realize their personal goals and hence personal selves. Although it is indeed laudable that the state intends to enhance education quality and the betterment of students through a variety of decentralized policies, its utilitarian, efficiency-minded way of thinking, and furtherance of mythicizing autonomy and its effects on concepts like freedom, responsibility and moral justice

systematically omit the structural issues that result in the failure and/or impoverishment of individual institutions/actors in the first place. Consequently, what is urgently necessary for state education is absolute attention to these omitted structural issues, which will be explicated in the following section.

The Ignored Structural Issues

In *Middle Education in the Middle Kingdom: The Chinese Junior High School in Modern Taiwan*, Smith (1997) summarizes the Taiwanese education system with the term “Academic Darwinism”. An Academic Darwinist system, as the name suggests, is one in which academically-able students can move up the social ladder, whereas their less able counterparts are either voluntarily or involuntarily removed from the ladder. This particular educational ecosystem is supported by three primary, dialectically interrelated structures which, if left unexamined, render the centre’s talk of improving education as mere idealism and verbalism. Certainly, other educational aspects also need to be problematized, and these will be considered in later chapters. For now, let us focus on these three structural hindrances to thinking-outside-the-box, which I interpret as critical and responsible education promoted by the state.

Driven by educational meritocracy, the state’s historical structures, its “educational league table”, “Multiple Entrance System” (MOE, 2007a), and “National Joint University Entrance Examination System”, are deemed indispensable for selecting the “able” students from those “dis-abled”. These seemingly commonsensical mechanisms normalize teaching and learning to testing, ability-grouping and streamed teaching, and in turn (re)produce a social hierarchy and educational inequality that we can neither ignore nor afford. Like mainland China, Taiwan is known for its rigid examination system and overemphasis on students’ academic performance. Implemented since 1954, the National Joint University Entrance Examination

System has been utilized for student admission to either universities (academic) or technical colleges (vocational) (GIO, 2011; Hsieh, 2010). Such a mechanism is widely agreed to be insensitive to gender, ethnicity and general family background, and thus the fairest arbiter for social upward mobility (Wang, 2001). From this perspective, every student shares an equal opportunity to be admitted to university, given the same form of assessment is used for all. This assumption, however, could not be more wrong. As an array of local researchers (Chen & Zheng, 1986; Huang, 1999; Pan & Yu, 1999; Wang, 2001; Yang, 1994; Yang & Ye, 1984; Zheng, Xei & Huang, 1996) have shown, the National Joint University Entrance Examination System is discriminatory, particularly against children from a low socio-economic background: while the advantaged students attend university, the disadvantaged students are either relegated to technical colleges or must move directly into the job market. This is how the existing social hierarchy and academic inequality are perpetuated through the state's education system.

With regard to educational inequity, Chou and Ho's (2007) and Wang's (2001) local studies further demonstrate that it is not merely the outcome of national standardized examination, but something saturated throughout students' learning processes. According to Chou and Ho's (2007) research, children's abilities are commonly conceived as fixed and unchangeable, so parents tend to unquestioningly accept that the centre's educational practice of grouping children into either an "elite class" or "normal class" on the basis of their abilities is an appropriate means of protecting their self-esteem. This *naïve knowledge*, as Freire would term it, is, unfortunately, not the parents' only mistaken belief, as paradoxically they also believe in educational meritocracy, meaning that children's efforts can make up their deficient abilities (Chou & Ho, 2007). The implication is that it is always possible for children to be transferred from the normal class to the elite class, so long as they

work, or “cram” hard enough. Consequently, the ability-grouping practice is supported by the unconscious parents and students, whose acquiescence fails to probe into and problematize its true purpose.

On the other hand, Wang’s (2001) historical research points out how the centre’s customary use of an educational league table is inherently unjust, as the means by which students’ future educational track and occupation are dogmatically predetermined. Interestingly, Wang’s (2001) argument is supported by the assertion of the Ministry of Education (2007b), according to which graduates from the leading universities have a much better chance of being recruited by prestigious companies, and it is these universities that generally admit senior high school graduates from the elite track system. The very unequal opportunities for academic/vocational senior high school students to attend the higher-ranked universities is confirmed by Cho’s (2005) statistical data for 1992: the admission opportunity rate for the former (academic) and latter (vocational) groups were 110.5% and 27.9% respectively. What this extremely unequal educational and career opportunity tells students is that there is only one way to realize future personal success, that is, unremittingly compete against, rather than cooperate, with each other for “excellent” academic performance.

In fact, this competitive learning condition is explicitly acknowledged by the Taiwanese Government Information Office (2011): “scholarly attainment brought reputation to oneself and *honor to one’s parents* [my italics] [and yet, it also] result[ed] in excessive competition pressure to pursue higher education” (p. 4). One may think that the centre’s recognition would logically lead to certain changes in the education system, such as abolishing the examination system, encouraging critical thinking, reflection, interpretation and judgment, or at least promoting some forms of teaching and learning that do not specifically rely on

direct transmission and rote memorization. Yet the Government Information Office's (2005) view on competition being excessive is paradoxically unsatisfying: "cram schools fulfill a definite need in Taiwan's educational system" (p. 16). The Ministry of Education responds to the ferocious academic competition between students as something that "simply represent[s] the price [being] paid for a *meritocracy* with limited space at the top" (cited in Lucas, 1982, p. 213).

In 2000, the centre drastically changed its attitude towards peer academic competition and implemented the policy of the Multiple Entrance System to ameliorate the problem (MOE, 2007a). This system provides students with three accessible "choices" when applying for tertiary study; they are respectively based on students' (1) Academic Achievement Test result, (2) prominent talent records and/or (3) National Joint University Entrance Examination result (MOE, 2007a). The centre asserts that this system will encourage students to take account of other capabilities and hence contribute to the development of balanced intelligence and the equalization of power (GIO, 2011; MOE, 2007a). Nonetheless, I contend here that such a simple-minded assumption works against the state's expectation, if its expectation really is to eradicate the phenomenon of Academic Darwinism and promote equality of opportunity. This is because the alternative access of (1) is simply the same medicine with different packaging: it has no actual difference from (3), as it still emphasizes the use of inequitable (academic) examination to select students. At most, we can say that the alternative access of (2) gives students one more opportunity to compete if they failed in either (1) or (3). Yet (2) overlooks something fundamental about talent. Talent, like ability, is not at all an inborn quality; rather it requires cultivation, and cultivation is largely determined by the environment (Gilbert, 2005). This means that whether or not a child could become the next Mozart is predominantly dependent on the socio-economic factors of his/her family. Now, let us ask ourselves whether a child whose basic needs are scarcely met

is not immediately handicapped in a competitive environment; it is unlikely that option (2), the prominent talents record, can provide significant equal (educational) opportunity for economically disadvantaged children.

Overall, the choices provided by the Multiple Entrance System (MOE, 2007a) are hardly meaningful to children who have academic or economic disadvantages, for these choices are either structured by neo-liberalism's belief in meritocracy or accompanied by undue expenses for parents to develop their children's talents and for university application (Chen, 2001). Too often, an education system that operates from a capitalist perspective ignores the existing structural causes of resource and academic inequality, so the "have-nots" are simply labeled as "failures", taking the blame for the consequences of unjust socio-educational structures (Wang, 2001). It should be clear by now that the impediments to a critical, responsible education in Taiwan do not reside in the lack of consumer choices, or in autonomy. Rather, they reside essentially in the dialectically interrelated structures of the educational league table, Multiple Entrance System (MOE, 2007a) and the National Joint University Entrance Examination System. These structural hindrances lock the state's education into a think-*in*-rather-than-outside-the-box mentality, which is analogized by UNESCO (2007) as a kind of "disease" that spreads "at the expense of genuine education" (p. 68). Thus, if the central government is authentically committed to improving the quality of education, it must not shy away from these structural issues, but confront and address them in a serious manner.

While this chapter has identified the underlying structural causes that are accountable for the acritical, socially inequitable education offered by the state, there are, as mentioned earlier,

further aspects that need to be problematized to initiate possible progressive educational changes. These aspects will be briefly presented in the following section.

The Thesis Structure and Research Questions

The 2005 implementation of the Ministry of Education's (2007a) *Performance-Based School Management* policy brought about an abrupt replacement of traditional heteronomy with autonomy as the aim of the state's postmodern education. The centre's assumption that values of "freedom", "equality" and "responsibility" can be realized when each educational participant is free from external influences, and governed solely by self-made laws (CER, 1996; MOE, 2006a), overlooks that we are always shaped by socio-political and socio-cultural practices. Accordingly, in Chapter 2, I will firstly argue that government officials' drastic turn to autonomy, as an important task of shifting culture, overlooks Taiwan's *contextual specificity* regarding the way the society has been historically conditioned by Confucian tradition, namely, authoritative heteronomous determination. Demanding that citizens become the subject in Kantian (moral) philosophy demonstrates not only the centre's uncritical self-westernization, but also its hostility towards different ways of being. With respect to Kant's autonomous subject, its *impersonal rationality* views the dignity and worth of the Other² not as intrinsic to that person himself/herself, but as something derived from his/her ability to reason, rendering any social member who does not value, or cannot live up to this norm, as a strange identity and thus rightfully excluded from

² In this thesis, I take up Levinas' (1998a) idea of *Other* (or *autrui*) as meaning something radically foreign and/or a singular individual whose absolute difference is neither reconcilable, nor reducible to another person. The use of the capital O contains philosophical significance, as it opposes most of the Western philosophies which adhere to the idea of "the same" and thus consider one's relationship with the Other not as an infinite obligation towards this person's (a person other than one's self) unknowable difference, but as something reducible to one's own self and thinking. My use of *Others*, then, must not be read as erasing differences between one person/nation from another and/or assimilating differences as it specifically refers to Other "individual" persons/nations.

my³ responsibility (Joldersma, 2008; Strhan, 2009). On the other hand, the Kantian subject's freedom of rational will, unlimited by anything other than myself, sanctions the *objectification* of the Other in which his/her very otherness is to be reduced to my own comprehension so as to be assimilated by me (Levinas, 1998a). This prioritization of the autonomous self that limits concerns for the "proper" being of the individual postulates freedom as essential – essential not for each to *be* (different) and to assume ethical limits (Freire, 2004; Levinas, 2001; Strhan, 2009), but to conceive and to make perpetual rational choices in direct relation to market activities (Olssen, 2005, 2010). Premised on such an argument, Chapter 2 will investigate the research question: "In what ways does the introduction of autonomy support democracy, rights, freedom, and morality in Taiwanese education?"

In demanding that each Taiwanese student (or citizens in general) attain a standardized subjectivity, autonomy not only helps perpetuate an authoritative pedagogy of "learning to become" (Todd, 2001a, p. 432), but also an *egoistic* conception of selfhood, freedom and morality. Neo-liberalism's promotion of autonomy that underemphasizes the structures of social and institutional support beyond personal achievements masks human relative dependency and connectedness (Olssen, 2005, 2010). The normalization of self-management (e.g. self-direction, self-help) that seeks to spur personal accountability to capitalist democracy (re)produces a minimal government and a competitive market order wherein personal market choice is falsely equated with morality. Democracy cannot and must not be reduced to the right of individuals to exercise their sole negative freedom and rational autonomy in private, market activities; it is important that we recognize how a model of rational, autonomous choice is hardly realizable, in that the choices of individual citizens are

³ I use the first person to emphasize the importance of the self's responsibility to and for Others.

largely determined by their specific socio-economic conditioning (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995). Thus Chapter 3, in addition to destabilizing neo-liberalism's "myth of the self-made man" (Olssen, 2005, p. 373) and the autonomous chooser, will also attempt to answer the research question: "How can rights, freedom and morality be conceptualized in a way that supports a consistent discourse on Taiwanese (educational) democracy?"

Chapter 4 will explore how the liberal humanist idea of autonomy that defines "what it means to be human" supports neo-liberalism's notion of "rational progression", through a top-down globalizing approach in the political and economic spheres. From this perspective, progress is not a term that can be contested, or re-interpreted, nor can progress be made on the basis of a nation's/actor's specific socio-cultural aspirations. Rather, progress is universally applied to refer to an individual nation's/citizen's rational autonomous development of economy which then accords with neo-liberal norms of scientific management, rational distribution, free-market capitalism and "humanitarian assistencialization" (Freire, 2004, p. xxii). Such a totalizing discourse forgets how Others (in terms of other nations/individuals) are integral to the nation itself and the very personal self (Biesta, 2007a; Levinas, 1998a, 2001), so that the otherness (distinct subjectivity) of Others is not understood as something to be respected and protected, but as a deficiency that must be remediated through different forms of paternalism (Freire, 2004). In order to demonstrate how the success and failure of individual nations and social class has long been structured by neo-liberal conditioning, this chapter will investigate the research question: "How have nation states, particularly Taiwan, been impacted by the triad of globalization, neo-liberalism and liberal humanism during the 1960s and 1970s?"

While Chapter 4 focuses on the ways the social reality of modern societies is shaped by neo-liberal beliefs in reductionist (economic) rationalism and market imperialism, Chapter 5

will explore how these beliefs are ideologized by world policy agencies (OECD, 2000; APEC, 2000) as “entrepreneurial and consumerist individualism” which are then affected by member states’ further decentralization of the market economy, specifically in relation to the privatization and managerialization of postmodern education. By unquestioningly implementing neo-liberal economic policies, the consumerist government’s excessive emphasis on individual sovereignty and responsibility prevents the advent of a sense of Others both in the self and in the social consciousness of the community. Such a separatist approach neglects the ethical-political duty that the self has to Others, thereby disadvantaging the already underprivileged, de-professionalizing the teaching profession, and forestalling social practices of freedom, such as citizens’ vigilant co-governance of the centre’s institutional processes. Through exploring the research question, “To what extent do the Taiwanese government’s cultural practices of democratic capitalism bring the postmodern society greater (ethical) stability and solidarity?”, this chapter will argue for the indispensability of a (socially) participatory democracy wherein each member, although different, is mobilized by and united in common hopes – hopes for the state to move beyond a capitalist democracy and come to one that is essentially egalitarian and mindfully aware of ethical limits.

In a neo-liberal discourse, the true value of a decentralized, autonomized education does not lie in its (participatory) democratic promise, but in its instrumentality for capitalist production and consumption, and increased economic efficiency throughout educational processes (Peters & Marshall, 1990). Consequently, the state’s *Performance-Based School Management* policy (MOE, 2007a) which promotes personal autonomy, choice and responsibility in lifelong investment in learning (to acquire the intangible assets of knowledge, skills and competences), and the actualization of the self, will be argued to be a manifestation of democratic deficit. It is a deficit because the provision of learning is not

viewed as the centre's political responsibility, but is based on a supply-demand market technology; a deficit because the processes of learning emphasize competition and quantifiable performance rather than cooperation and qualitative growth; and a deficit because the goal of learning does not aim to perfect social democracy and equity, but to maximize the individual's productivity and cognitive ability to adapt to rather than change the existing unjust reality. By exploring the research question: "To what extent does the Taiwanese government's promotion of autonomy encourage citizens to challenge the practices and structures that underpin the idea of lifelong learning in a knowledge-based economy?", Chapter 6 will demonstrate how autonomy is pragmatically desirable to the state's education only insofar it is able to normalize the *responsibilization* and *performativity* intended by the minimal government.

Encouraging citizens to perpetually *adapt* into the objective reality reflects neo-liberalism's mechanistic, objectivist epistemology. On this basis, there is no possibility for social transformation as we are mere objects passively acted upon by society and never acting on it (Roberts, 2000). To put it differently, the Taiwanese people are subject to neo-liberalism's *monistic* way of being, knowing, seeing, thinking, relating and doing in order to make the great human progression, a definition that is also monistically *given* by neo-liberal politicians. In relation to education, performativity and its derived practices of *managerial accountability*, *scientific technicality*, and *standardized human capital training* are rationalized as the one and only way to improve quality and performance in *all* postmodern education systems (Biesta, 2004a, 2009b, 2010c; Freire, 2004; Hslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Underpinned largely by the modern framework of education, this one-size-fits-all model overlooks the importance of contextuality and the impossibility of neutralizing and standardizing educational practices (Gilbert, 2005, 2010), as there are always external (e.g. political, social, cultural, ideological) and internal (e.g. personal psychological, health)

factors involved throughout the educational processes and certain, if not complete, heterogeneity from one human to another. Thus, the research question of Chapter 7, “To what extent does the Taiwanese government’s commitment to autonomy encourage pedagogical approaches, evaluation and design other than a modern and/or neo-liberal framework?” will be investigated alongside the objective of providing an alternative model for the state’s education, so that the very alterity⁴ of individual students (their distinct subjectivity, capabilities, learning approach and outcome) is respected in its own right and fully supported not so it will *become*, but for its *becoming*.

By critically analyzing the educational policies implemented by the Taiwanese government during 2000-2008, Chapter 8 will demonstrate how the Third Way that aims for “the *modernization of social democracy*” (Giddens, 2003, p. 1) ostensibly promotes social egalitarianism, while intensifying neo-liberalism’s ideologies of “instrumental pragmatism” and “economic rationalism” (Anderson, 2000). As the Third Way is to embrace entrepreneurial, competitive individualism, market economy and globalization (Codd, 2005; Fitzsimons, 2006; Roberts, 2009), the reduction of social and labourer exclusion is not to be achieved by a welfare state’s approach to *equality of outcome*, but by a workfare state’s approach to *equality of opportunity*, wherein minimal assistance benefits and certain incentives are offered to encourage the advent of individual responsibility in counteracting personal inactivity and unemployability (Perkins, Nelms & Smyth, 2005). Focusing on how to enhance national/individual economic performance through specific (conditional) investment and effective public-private partnership in social welfare and educational programmes, the Taiwanese government views social problems not as a *totality*, or the effects of wider global/national structures, but as a mere aggregation of impediments which can be solved by a series of disconnected, focalized policies. Given that the fundamental

⁴ Alterity is interpreted by Levinas (2004) as “the radical heterogeneity of the other” (p. 36).

structural causes of citizens' lack of productivity are largely overlooked, this chapter will research the question: "In what ways are social equality and inclusion understood and practised by a social investment state like Taiwan?"

By articulating the examination of the state's educational policies, Chapter 9 will illustrate how the centre's so-called "accountable" education supports a winner-takes-all condition wherein everyone is provided with an equal opportunity in a *selective*, meritocratic-based education system (Treanor, n.d.). Students in an education system that operates according to a business logic are treated as employees, differentiated and compensated in direct relation to their effort and ability. Educational institutions are no longer concerned with equality but *efficiency*, as the question is now shifted from what schools can do for students to what type of students can best contribute to schools' overall performance (Biesta, 2004a). On the other hand, the exploration will also focus on the way a rather dubious civic responsibility is promoted by the Third Way community which not only legitimates corporate strategic philanthropy (or community investment), but also the reduction of Others' alterity through knowledge and sympathy (Biesta, 2004c; Todd, 2004). By critically analyzing the research question: "In what ways are social mobility and moral justice in education supported by the Third Way government?", this chapter will provide an alternative conceptualization of "community", "civic responsibility", and "citizenship" that is compatible with a social democracy – democracy which takes participatory practices, human pluralism, ignorance, and sensitivity as the centrality throughout every political and social process.

Chapter 10 will argue for the necessity of initiating a fundamental epistemological shift from neo-liberalism's mechanistic, objectivist paradigm to Freire's (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2004) dialectical episteme that recognizes the *dynamic, multi-layered* interaction between

objective reality (e.g. political, economic, social, cultural systems) and subjective consciousness, and therefore the feasibility of progressive social changes. In the dialectical worldview, education is not a neutral standardized process of knowledge transmission and reproduction based on the teacher's monologue and students' memorization. Instead, learning is reconnected to society, situated in the students' concrete contexts wherein each is encouraged to enter into a self-other ethical relation and dialogical communication to question, interpret, deconstruct and reconstruct generative themes (e.g. themes of power domination, economic imbalances, cultural imposition, and social inequalities) so as to morally imagine a more humanized global/national society (Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2011; Hyslop-Margison & Armstrong, 2004). In so doing, knowledge is no longer acquired by students as segmented units, but as an integrated whole (interdisciplinary learning) which, after rearrangement, becomes the creation (new knowledge) of students' collective intelligence. Such a shift in epistemology that destabilizes neo-liberalism's mechanistic, rational (pragmatic), reductionist (contextualless) approach to education does not seek to impose another normalized universal framework for us to teach and learn; rather it seeks to open up a more holistic educative space where all participants are allowed to grow, with others, in totality, liberated through their very act of question-posing (Freire, 1996). Consequently, to free the state's education from Kant's and/or (neo)liberal political's interpretation of autonomy, this chapter will pose the question: "How can autonomy be conceptualized and practised in an alternative way that embodies a true liberating education?"

By exploring the Levinasian subject and his transcendent view on (moral) education, Chapter 11 will consider the research question: "In what ways does heteronomous autonomy support a more just and responsible education?" Rather than objectifying individual students and engineering each through a violent pedagogy of "learning to become" (Todd, 2001a, p.

432), a heteronomous-autonomy-based education recognizes the imperative of an *ethical* pedagogical relationship, and an always *becoming* state of human subjectivity, and therefore would focus on activities that will allow each individual to be subjectified as an irreplaceable singularity (Biesta, 2009b; Levinas, 2004; Strhan, 2007). A subjectified self's responsibility is heteronomously summoned and yet autonomously responded to by himself/herself (Levinas, 1998a; Strhan, 2009). It is this absolute non-egoist responsibility that the self has to and for Others and their otherness that in turn brings that person infinite freedom, and, at the same time, confirms his/her unique individuality (Levinas, 1998a, 2004). Welcoming and respecting the unknowable alterity of Others requires *receptive sensibility* in the self as it is by being open to differences that the self can learn *from* Others, while opening up a space where differences are no longer something to be assimilated, but can just *be* (Levinas, 2004; Todd, 2003). Underpinned by pedagogies of *subjectification* and *self-alternation*, this new education that aims to develop the “interdependent self” and “altered ego” for better modes of human togetherness is more socially and democratically desirable than the neo-liberal model which projects the “independent, egoistic self” as the goal.

Chapter 12 will conclude that a shift in epistemology is crucial for the state to move beyond the current capitalist paradigm and come to one that is essentially egalitarian, and is socially intellectual not in reproducing, but reinventing and transforming existing pedagogical approaches, arrangement, evaluation and design. Only then can democratic justice and social equality in education be increased.

Chapter Two:

THE WESTERN IDEAL OF AUTONOMY IN THE EASTERN CONTEXT

Because of Confucian-embedded cultural beliefs, the Western individualistic idea of autonomy was traditionally regarded by the East as harmful to social harmony and familial ethics. In the post-modern period, though, the concept of autonomy has come to be synonymous with the defence of Taiwanese freedom and democracy. Autonomy is not only defined by the centre as the departure point of the “Chinese intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment” (MOE, 2007a, p. 11), but the destination of the state’s liberal humanistic education. Given the primary status of autonomy and its ambiguous complexity, this chapter will concentrate on three exploration foci: (1) autonomy in educational literature; (2) autonomy in Kantian liberal philosophy; and (3) autonomy in (neo)liberal political philosophy.

With regard to (1), the aim is to identify what limitations of autonomy must be attended to before the Taiwanese government can expect the emergence of a self-directive, autonomous educational environment. For (2), investigation will focus on Kant’s absolute truth of man and his being in order to understand the origin of an *enlightened* education and its theoretical entailments for the state’s educational practices and social existence. Arguably, Kant’s imposition of an impersonal form of universal autonomy and its dialectical interaction with the state’s specific historical, cultural conditioning help reinforce not educational democracy, autonomy and diversity, but authoritarian heteronomy and monistic sameness. By employing the philosophical insights of Levinas (1998a, 2001) and Freire (2004), Kantian ego-centred ethics will be problematized and argued as an undesirable model for anyone who commits to the construction of a radically democratic, just and responsible education.

Lastly but not least, (3) will explore how the very different interests in the application of autonomy led to (neo)liberal political, such as Reich (2002) and Levinson (1999), endorsing exclusive personal right and freedom to pursue self-sovereignty and socio-cultural sameness at the expense of collective heteronomy and human diversity. The aim is to unravel how the idea of autonomy functions as a political-ideological means by which individual citizens are directed towards a road of unfreedom (Deleuze, 1988; Levinas, 2003), a dehumanizing journey where their fundamental right to *be* is arbitrarily “exchanged” for possession of the right to *choose*.

Taiwanese Education: From Authoritarian Heteronomy to Autonomy

Deeply influenced by Confucian philosophy, Taiwan is a clan-based society abiding by a hierarchical, patriarchal system which consists of five unequal social relationships: (1) the ruler/the ruled; (2) parent (especially the father)/child; (3) male/female; (4) teacher/student; and (5) elder/youth (Ng, 2000; Wang & Loncar, 2009). Such a system demands unquestioning obedience from the weaker, younger and female members to those who are stronger, older and male. Because of the emphasis on authoritarian conformity and social harmony, concepts of individuality and independence (or autonomy) were viewed as detrimental to communal interdependence and familial ethics (collectivity). In Confucian familial ethics, filial piety has three major moral requirements: respect for one’s parents; honoring and never disgracing them; and supporting them financially. The expression of one’s respect for parents, as Chan (2002) states, is to “obey parental wishes [and choices]” (p. 303). Parents’ demand of children’s unquestioning conformity is derived from scribed authority (simply for who they are), and this form of respect is equally demanded by teachers from students (Craig, 1997; Ng, 2000).

Confucianism in education is argued by many scholars (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Ng, 2000; Wang & Loncar, 2009) to be manifested in cultural mental mechanisms that restrict the value of autonomy, critical thinking and active classroom participation; instead, education is characterized by authoritative, teacher-dominated transmission models of learning. Jingbo and Elicker (2005) indicate that the primary concern of teachers is to control students' learning and restrain their behaviours to ensure that they will act in accord with social norms and be accepted by the society as a whole. Thus, this state of being governed by external authoritarian forces represents the traditional culture of "authoritative heteronomous determination" in Taiwan. The Western ideal of personal autonomy is not only foreign, but fundamentally irrelevant to the objective of Taiwanese education, at least up to 2005.

The Taiwanese government describes the 2005 reform policy of *Performance-Based School Management*, premised on autonomy and self-governance, as promoting "Chinese intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment" (MOE, 2007a, p. 11). The state claims that the conventional disrespect for autonomy and self-determination, first and foremost, denies one a dignified life (CER, 1996). Being passively dependent on (the will of) another for instruction or guidance not only undermines the possibility of the state becoming an autonomized, lifelong learning society, but also impedes the appearance of an improved education that is responsible (self-directive) and critical (CER, 1996; MOE, 2007a). Thus, Taiwanese citizens must separate from the "heterogeneous [and authoritarian] cultural legacy" and uphold "a universal principle [of autonomy] lying behind a civilized society" (MOE, 2007a, p. 2).

The Ministry of Education (2007a) asserts that to "respect individuals' choice of values by bring[ing] full autonomy to Taiwan's campus" (pp. 7-8) represents the government's liberal *humanistic* educational practices. Through (potential) self-governance, the values of

freedom, equality and responsibility are simultaneously realized as the empowered individual (school principals, teachers, and students with the help of their teachers and parents) will be motivated to teach and learn in an autonomous way that is optimal to actualize his/her maximum potential (CER, 1996; MOE, 2006a). The underlying assumption is clear: autonomy is presupposed to enhance education. If the state's respect for teachers' autonomy fails to bring about this expected outcome, the Council on Education Reform (1996) dogmatically concludes: "autonomy will become of no value and there will be no reason for it to exist in the education system" (p. 3).

Many scholars, such as Benson (2006) and Schmenk (2005), have argued that the concept of autonomy is essentially a Western ideal that emphasizes values like individualism and active classroom participation that are culturally inappropriate for their non-Western counterparts. Nonetheless, the Taiwanese government, with its complete disregard of the contextual differences⁵ between the East and the West, has arbitrarily imposed such a concept on the state's education. This can be seen, for example, in Article 8 of the Educational Fundamental Act (Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China, 2011) which states that teachers' professional autonomy shall be respected. Further, Articles 16-5 and 16-6 of the Teachers' Act (MOE, 2007b) underscore that "teachers *must* enjoy professional autonomy in their teaching activities" (p. 2). As the idea of autonomy originates from the West, I shall explore Western educational literature to indentify its possibilities and limitations for education in Taiwan, with specific reference to (English language)⁶ education.

⁵ Note that contextual differences exist not only between the East and West, but between countries and communities within each country.

⁶ Parentheses are used to indicate that autonomy is not solely applied to the state's English language education, but to the state's education in a general sense.

Autonomy as Personal Responsibility, Self-Directive Capacity and Intrinsic Motivation

There is now an abundance of Western literature that addresses the importance of autonomy in English language education. Autonomy in the education context is generally interpreted as personal responsibility and self-directive capacity to engage with one's teaching and learning (Nunan, 1997). Holec (1981) defines autonomy as an attribute of the learner/teacher in their ability to take charge of their own teaching and learning. The term is also used by Dickinson (1987) to explain the complete responsibility that learners/teachers have towards their decisions concerned with their learning/teaching and the implementation of those decisions. Benson (2006) and Zhou, Ma and Deci (2009) consider that the significance of autonomy results from its inextricable link to teachers' and students' *intrinsic motivation*. Unlike extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is primarily driven by enjoyment in the task itself, independent of any external coercion or reward.

Benson (2006) explains that teachers and students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage actively in the task and seek ways to improve their skills that will enhance their performance. Sprague (1992) claims that intrinsic motivation will lead teachers and students to embrace the role of lifelong learners, unlearn conventional educational practices, co-design creative learning experiences, and increase their rational judgment ability. This is to say that when individuals are able to determine teaching and learning for themselves, their intrinsic motivation will allow a self-directive or autonomous educational environment to be effectively implemented. Such a claim necessitates an investigation, explored in Chapter 7, of whether or not Taiwanese teachers and students are indeed motivated intrinsically, and to what extent autonomy has been implemented as a pedagogical approach since the 2005 reform process.

Limitation in Autonomy: Context-Dependency

Even though autonomy has potential merits for teaching and learning, Benson (2006), Schmenk (2005) and Sprague (1992) point out that its context-dependent nature can also limit the extent of its contribution. They claim that the degree to which an individual can exercise his/her autonomous capacity will be dictated by the interplay of micro and macro forces. Macro level forces refer to educational history and sociology (e.g. educational discourse), whereas micro level forces pertain to an individual's personal history (e.g. home discourse, cultural factors) and psychology. Benson (2006) explains that the dialectical interaction between teachers' and students' macro and micro level experiences will influence their overall attitude towards and efforts put into education. For example, students in an encouraging classroom discourse will have more confidence to experiment with their curiosity because they know that making mistakes is not a crime, but a natural occurrence during the discovery learning process. What is important is that they learn from the lesson provided by the error they make. Likewise, a supportive educational discourse that affords opportunities for a teacher's professional development, extra time for collaboration and channels for effective communication is conducive to teachers' psychological growth. Such a discourse offers teachers necessary guidance and facilitates a more informed analysis of their new role of curriculum selector and/or developer within a changing educational environment.

Nevertheless, English language teachers' opportunities for professional development, reflected in the Ministry of Education's (2006g) *Establishing Teacher Cultivation Performance Evaluation and Exit Mechanism to Enforce the Policy of Preserving the*

Superior and Weeding out the Inferior, seem rather limited⁷. Moreover, in-service training has limited state subsidy and must be undertaken largely or wholly at the teacher's expense (MOE, 2006g). This inadequate government support needs to be explained together within the context of Palfreyman and Smith's (2003) theory of weak and strong versions of pedagogy for autonomy, which illuminates how the state's pedagogical approach is affected by its particular conceptualization of autonomy in English language teachers. Autonomy in Palfreyman and Smith's (2003) weak version of pedagogy is acknowledged as a capacity which teachers currently lack, and thus emphasizes a need for external interventions, such as in-service training, seminars, and professional development. The strong version, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that teachers are *already* autonomous, and optimal teaching and learning conditions can be actualized by giving teachers opportunities in exercising their autonomous capacity. According to Benson (2006), this strong version is associated by Ribe (2003) with his own divergence models, wherein a more open, flexible approach to English language curricula is encouraged in order to allow the performance of teacher autonomy in management and decision-making. Thus, based on Palfreyman and Smith's (2003) and Ribe's (2003) respective theories, we may assert that the relegation to teachers of deciding curriculum content without much support results from the state's employment of the strong version for teacher autonomy.

Benson (2006) states that this strong version is usually perceived as more legitimate than the weak version because it allows the practice of a higher level of autonomy. The underlying

⁷ In the document, only nine in-service training programmes are provided to teachers: 1) Education Credit and Master's Degree Classes; 2) Field Teaching Credit Classes; 3) Specialty Augmentation Credit Classes; 4) Second Specialty Credit Classes; 5) Teaching Performance Credit Classes; 6) Teaching Internalization Credit Classes; 7) Curriculum Design and Teaching; 8) Class Management and Guidance; and 9) Research Development and In-Service Education (pp. 3-6). The programmes offered also seem to narrowly focus on the enhancement of teachers' *personal* productivity and performance.

assumption is that the government respects and values the capability of English language teachers in autonomous actions, especially in regard to decisions about the content of teaching (Benson, 2006). Nevertheless, without careful consideration of the limitations inherent in the specificity of educational discourse and in the attendant history, Nunan (1997) argues that the expectation of the automatic emergence of autonomy as an outcome of radical educational reform is fundamentally superficial. Likewise, the state's expectations of an autonomy-based education, I shall argue here, are impossible because of the failure to recognize deep-rooted cultural factors and the philosophical underpinning of previous educational practices, as well as the failure to provide teachers with the necessary assistance programmes.

It is important that we bear in mind that the task of shifting culture and educational philosophy is not something that can be achieved simply by the insistence of the government (or anyone), nor can it be realized within a short period of time. Even though I do agree that some particular Taiwanese cultures (e.g.: uncritical conformity and overdependency) need certain modifications, I do not think it is appropriate to reject them once and for all in favour of autonomy – a Western creation that defends not so much the Eastern way of life, but a particular way of living in the West. In my view, an important transformative mission as such shall not and must not be reduced to an imitation of a Western blueprint. Instead, it needs to be contemplated thoroughly, with sense and prudence, if the state means to be original, creative and critical in its educational practices. An alternative framework of autonomy that is not antithetical to, but compatible with the Taiwanese collectivist tradition is therefore necessary. An alternative blueprint is proposed and applied to actual educational practices in Chapters 10 and 11.

Politically-Conditioned Autos: Autonomous or Authoritarian Heteronomous?

Originally, the concept of autonomy was applied to the political context, rather than to morality or education. A city state was said to be autonomous if it was independent from other adjoining cities. According to Olssen (2005), it was Plato, a Classical Greek philosopher, who extended autonomy from city states to individuals, with regard to their personal development and growth. There are two aspects to the concept of autonomy: the *autos* – the individual or the self, and the *nomos* – the moral laws. Individuals are said to be autonomous to the extent that they are free from external influences and governed *internally* by moral laws that are self-given. Nevertheless, this understanding of autonomy, I contend here, is never realized because the *autos* is always *externally* governed by cultural and political factors, that is, certain social conventions and the state's policies and institutions. It is precisely this political element of autonomy that I wish to point out as something that the educational literature fails to capture, as it associates the term primarily with individuals' particular personal attributes (Benson, 2006; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981; Sprague, 1992; Zhou, Ma & Deci, 2009).

Thus, prior to probing into the way autonomy is conceptualized in liberal philosophical literature, I shall demonstrate how the state's promotion of autonomy contradicts its political practice of authoritarian heteronomy, specifically in relation to students. The term of authoritarian heteronomy that I use emphasizes the authoritarian (as opposed to the social democratic) force embedded in the long-standing Taiwanese culture of heteronomous determination. Such exterior-conditioning is evident in the rationale of the Council on Education Reform (1996): "students are not yet [sufficiently] mature to exercise their rights, therefore, the government needs to endorse parental rights in education which it directly protects students' learning rights" (p. 2).

Shortly after the announcement of CER (1996), Article 8 of the Educational Fundamental Act, was amended to read that “parental choice in education must be respected and protected” (Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China). What this suggests is that parents, unlike children, are sufficiently autonomous and capable of making rational educational choices in the best interests of their children. Teachers, on the other hand, are required by CER (1996) to “direct” their students so that they become learners who are autonomously independent. Along this line of thinking, we may assert that the expected role of parents and teachers remains that of “authoritarian authority”, rather than being a “democratic advisor” who encourages children’s (relative) autonomy and their experiment with freedom of expression and action. Given students are still clearly determined by external authoritarian forces, I shall question whether it is autonomy or authoritarian heteronomy that the state really seeks to promote. This paradoxical position on the part of the central government is certainly concerning for it represents an inconsistent discourse or a discrepancy between speech and deed. Even if the Taiwanese people accept autonomy as the primary aim of education, it is important that we do so by making sure we understand the implications of such a concept for ethics in education. Hence, the next section will explore the Kantian conception of autonomy and its theoretical consequence for the state’s (neo)liberal humanistic education.

Problematizing Kantian (Moral) Autonomy: Impersonal Rationality and its Ethics of the Same

For Kant⁸, it was central to the Enlightenment’s individuating process that every human becomes free, capable of thinking for himself/herself and making use of his/her reason

⁸ In this thesis, I adopt the interpretations of Biesta (1999, 2004c, 2006b, 2010a), Chan (2002), Joldersma (2008), Strhan (2009), and Zhang (2007) on Kant’s liberal philosophy with regard to the subject, autonomy, freedom, responsibility and ethics.

(Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006). One's "free thinking" and "thinking rationally for oneself" are not perceived as contingent historical possibility, but as natural capacities of, and the ultimate vocation for humanity (Biesta, 2006b). The subtitle of the *Performance-Based School Management* policy, "Chinese intellectuals of the Age of Enlightenment" (MOE, 2007a, p.11), suggests that the Taiwanese government endorses this particular "enlightened" thought of the West and expects the state's education to "liberate" each student by bringing them to reason. The task of teachers then is to help release individual students from their immaturity, so that they will eventually break away from the heteronomy of the will and the direction of external authorities (Biesta, 2010a). For Kant, a mature, autonomous person is one who is capable of using his/her own cognitive understanding and acting to the maximum of his/her will and rationality. Governed by self-made law, the Kantian subject's radical free expression of rational will is not only morally valid (Marshall, 1996), but also a realization of personal worth and dignity (Joldersma, 2008). As Kant explains:

[the lawgiving itself] which determines all worth, must for that very reason have a dignity, that is, an unconditional, incomparable worth; And the word respect alone provides a becoming expression for the estimate of it that a rational being must give. *Autonomy* is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational creature (cited in Joldersma, 2008, p. 28).

Because our ability to reason is what makes us different from irrational creatures, shared universal rationality becomes the underpinning of Kantian ethics. In this model, we are all *essentially* the same and we have *reciprocal* responsibility to respect others' rationality and moral capability. An ethical moment happens when I shoulder my responsibility for, and give my respect to another human being because that person, like myself, reveals his/her potentiality to practice rational autonomy, that is, to legislate and comply with universal

moral law (Strhan, 2009). For Joldersma (2008), Kant's demand for human conformity with rationality suggests that we are simply the subjects of reason, rather than our reason's masters. More importantly, Kant's understanding of ethics does not account for difference and diversity in terms of ways of knowing (epistemological) and being (ontological) in that my responsibility for others is entirely derived from my recognition of those people as being the *same* as me (Strhan, 2009).

This ethical model of the "same" which delineates my responsibility to and for the Other as a matter of *choice*, depending on whether or not this other is capable of rationality, is potentially dangerous: it views the worth and dignity of the Other as something derived solely from moral law, rather than intrinsic to that Other as a unique individual (Joldersma, 2008). From the perspective of Strhan (2009), Kantian ethics open a door for a Holocaust, whereas Putnam (2002) questions: "what becomes of our obligations to those who[se] rationality we can more or less plausibly deny?" (p. 35). Indeed, Kant's ideas of shared universal morality and rationality have disastrous implications for education: they overlook the contextual reality, meaning that what is considered to be naturally normal in one society/family may not be in another. As a result, students whose "rational" autonomy differs epistemologically and ontologically from the normative subject can be unproblematically excluded by teachers and peers. For a society like Taiwan, which has long been determined heterogeneously, this drastic shift to judge students' worth by their displayed autonomous capacity would perhaps do more harm than good to the development of their personal self.

In addition to its dehumanizing attempt to totalize human subjectivity, Kant's rational autonomy is also argued by Chan (2002) to be characterized by *impersonality*: "(self-made) law is to be made by an abstract self devoid of any particularistic features of a concrete

individual” (p. 285). In agreement, Joldersma (2008) argues further that such an impersonal autonomy, underpinned by an alleged universal rationality, introduces an *interchangeability* between individuals. Biesta (2004c) explicates that this is because “when we speak with the voice of the rational community, it is not really *me* who is speaking. My voice is simply the interchangeable voice of the rational community” (p. 317). For Strhan (2009), this replacement or interchangeableness is possible only because the Other is already reduced by Kant to the same, as having a common, pre-existed, pre-established reason and identity.

Strhan’s (2009) remark needs to be understood in relation to the characteristics of the Kantian subject. For Kant, the individual human being is not only a pre-social, rational, autonomous and self-sufficient subject who knows, but also an object that is graspable (Biesta, 1999). The self is the originating source of all forms of knowledge, including knowledge of Others. This means that the self is in total possession of what comes from the external environment. Knowledge of Others is, then, gained by the neutralization of alterity, that is, by reducing the otherness of Others to the same or to my own comprehension (Levinas, 1998a). As a result, my freedom of reason and cognition, unlimited by anything other than myself, reduces Others to comprehensible third terms and thus makes alterity disappear. In relation to education, Kant’s self-contained subject and his primacy of the same work against human pluralism and diversity imply that teachers and students “receive nothing of the Other but what is in me” (Levinas, 2004, p. 43). If there is nothing to be learned from differences of Others, as all is able to be understood by my rational autonomy, are we not simultaneously encouraging the (re)formation of a self-conceited population whose world, on the theoretical level, has no others, but only egoistical selves?

Kant’s overstatement of the self’s rational will is argued by Zhang (2007) to be an insufficient model to accommodate ethicality in education or social ethics in a more general

sense. From Zhang's (2007) perspective, Kantian ethics prioritize egology (the self), rational will and an egoist form of responsibility which Dobson (2006) describes as "casual". Such a narrow understanding of responsibility as *the self to and for the self* suggests that individual students, through the use of their will and rational capacity, are responsible largely, if not solely for their own realization of the personal self. Consequently, the self's *ethical relation* with Others and the limits of rational will are overlooked (Freire, 2004; Levinas, 1998a, 2001). A will without limits, as Freire (2004) puts it, "is a despotic will, one negating of other wills and, ultimately, negating of itself. Such is the illicit will of the 'owners of the world', who selfishly and arbitrarily can only see themselves" (p. 8).

In this regard, Levinas (1998a, 2001) agrees with Freire (2004), and argues that autonomy not only leads to an excessive focus on the self, but also neglects how a moral subject is always determined by another. Others for Levinas (1998a, 2001) are integral constituents of the self, and therefore an individual's first responsibility is not to and for the self, but to and for Others. Applying Levinas' thinking to pedagogical practice, Biesta (2006a) stresses that the teacher's chief responsibility is to interrupt and expand students' hopes – hopes that are to be moved beyond an egoistic orientation and connected to the hopes of Others. The recognition that our personal selves, our minds, our hopes and our actions are inextricably linked to, and dependent upon those of Others shows how the pursuit of self-ownership is not merely unattainable, but nonsensical. The message that Levinas (1998a, 2001) delivers is clear: the pursuit of autonomy, firstly and foremost, is a negation of the self, not to mention freedom, responsibility, plurality and ethics. Levinasian and Freirean ethics, which hold profound implications for an alternative emancipatory, responsible and just education in Taiwan, will be explored in detail in Chapters 10 and 11.

Problematizing (Neo)Liberalism's Personal Autonomy: Political Right and Freedom not to Be, but to Choose

In the previous sections, I have shown how morality is the central value of Kantian rational autonomy and its implications for education in terms of the type of subject, responsibility and relationality that are being formed. This section will illustrate how Kant's concern with morality is replaced with the political – the exclusive personal right, freedom and choices – within (neo)liberalism's conceptualization of autonomy. This replacement, however, remains somewhat unchanged, that is, the attempt to totalize humanity, thereby the plurality of human beings and their diverse socio-cultural aspiration, is subverted in favour of the pursuit of a self-ruling, autonomous choice-making population. To understand how personal autonomy is legitimately brought to the (neo)liberal political realm, it is necessary that we start from Reich's (2002) very notion of “minimalist autonomy”.

Unlike Kant, Barrow (2007) and Sartre (1976), who adhere to a pre-social ego, Reich's (2002) minimalist autonomy acknowledges an *embedded* conception of the self, meaning that people can at most be partially autonomous. Autonomy, in its minimalist sense, is no longer viewed by Reich (2002) as an innate quality of individual human beings, but as a capacity that all people should aim to achieve. The exercise of minimalist autonomy, Reich (2002) says, “varies by degree not only within each person and over a lifetime but also by degree across persons” (p. 93). What this demonstrates is that the application of minimalist autonomy diverges away from Kant's moral reasoning and is used ultimately for the individual's life, character, beliefs or values. Thus, we may assume that it is the personal, rather than the moral element of autonomy that a political liberal like Reich (2002) is more concerned with, and this is evident in the way Reich (2002) defines autonomy as:

A person's ability to reflect independently and critically upon basic commitments, desires and beliefs, be they chosen or unchosen, and to enjoy a range of meaningful life options from which to *choose*, upon which to act, and around which to orientate and pursue one's life projects (p. 46).

To enable the individual to adhere to his/her own conception of the good life, Reich (2002) further asserts that *negative liberty* must be treated as an indispensable political condition. It is, in other words, only by removing the unwanted external constraints, that individuals' autonomy can be secured and exercised freely. From Reich's (2002) perspective, the combination of negative freedom and minimalist autonomy ensures the right of individuals to engage in unforced and considered choosing to determine for themselves the way they want their lives to unfold. In this regard, Levinson (1999) supports Reich (2002) in that she perceives (neo)liberal freedom and democratic justice to be threatened, if individuals' possession of freedom and right to choose is left unprotected.

Clearly, (neo)liberals use autonomy to endorse individuals' right to choices as fundamental. Upholding the principle of human rights, the position of Reich (2002) and Levinson (1999) is surely not easy to argue against. Nevertheless, their attempts to generalize human beings and in the meantime exclude some particular Others are not unproblematic. For Reich (2002), minimalist autonomy is not only applicable to all cultural groups, but it must also be the ultimate aim of humanity. However, for Levinson (1999), religious people, infants, and the intellectually disabled cannot be autonomous as they are dependent on the heteronomous will for command and guidance. For example, Sister Susan's devotion to God, Levinson (1999) says, is a voluntary "self-enslavement and heteronomous choice-making" (p. 29) which is fundamentally at odds with "the term [autonomy] that literally means self-rule" (p. 29).

Levinson's (1999) assumption seems to suggest that human beings who are controlled by external forces, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, do not have the reflective and rational capacity that normal humans⁹ have. If this is so, what worth would these particular humans have? As a member of an Eastern society, I did not, do not, and probably will not value autonomy and choice. Given my cultural heritage, I refuse to accept autonomy as the one and only mode of existence as Reich (2002) and Levison (1999) arbitrarily expect. Chan (2002), for example, has made it clear that autonomous "choice-making in its popular sense in the West is not central in Confucianism" (p. 292), because Confucius believed that choices should be made on a collective level. It is, for this reason, that I contend, with Galston (1995), for a "right to exit" – exit from (neo)liberalism's imposition of my possession of the right to *choose*, and enter into my fundamental right to *be*.

With this contention, I by no means suggest that all Eastern members must exit also, nor do I suggest another normalized subjectivity. What I do suggest though, and this is consistent with the view of Swaine (2010), is that heteronomy should be the presupposition of a democratic society in which different ways of being are allowed to be broadly proliferated, and where communal members respect the integrity of their own way of life and be open to humbly learn from those different from themselves. Equally important is that any member's wish to exit at any time ought to be honoured rather than denigrated. With that said, the (neo)liberal state's efforts must not only be made to protect choices (in education), but also diverse social and cultural attributes, if differences and plurality are to be truly welcomed and respected.

⁹ In reality, all humans are conditioned by external forces, including political, cultural and social factors. This claim, however, is not to promote a fatalistic position as human beings are also capable to consciously recognize such conditionings, and thus go beyond and change them for a better society.

Autonomy as Political-Ideological Manacle

From a Foucauldian perspective, the (neo)liberal's turn to autonomy is appealing, yet illusionary because human nature is socially and politically constructed, rather than a pre-given entity. Rejecting Kant's transcendental view on human thought and reasons, Foucault argues that the consciousness of individuals is always conditioned by the world, dependent on our sensory experience and therefore no one can ever be fully autonomous (Olssen, 2010). As a non-foundationalist, Foucault also rejects Reich's (2002) and Levinson's (1999) generalizing accounts, arguing that they function as an ideologically oppressive force to erase socio-historical contingencies and the particularity of individuals (Peters & Marshall, 1996). For Foucault, there are clearly no universal laws to be accepted: "there is no one history of philosophy of science so there are no universal [moral] principles to be used in all cases of independent judgment" (cited in Peters & Marshall, 1996, p. 88). If this is so, there accordingly would be no essence of the self. In this respect, Levinas shares the same perspective as Foucault as he urges human beings to go *beyond essence* to a mode which is *otherwise than being* (Biesta, 2007a). This is to say that the primary question for Levinas (2001) is not about the being (nature) of the subject, but about the subject's *right to be*.

What Levinas (1998a) intends is a break away from ontology (being), from the excessive foci on the egology and the invisible aspect of human nature. The being of the self, whether Descartes' ego cogito or the Kantian subject, is independent and autonomous, and whose consciousness gives rise to the universe (Biesta, 1998). Olssen (2005) argues that this exaggeration of self-ownership and the knowledge of the self help reinforce (neo)liberalism's "myth of the self-made man" (p. 373). Such a myth manipulates human consciousness, by which we are misled to believe that we are truly free, independent and

autonomous actors. For Levinas (2003), the road to freedom is a matter of escaping from the ego, from being, from moving beyond self-interest to attend to the responsibility to and for Others. For Levinas (2003), autonomy cannot lead human beings to freedom because it is the “most radical and unalterably binding of chains” (p. 6). Consequently, our relentless pursuit of autonomy is not a pursuance of freedom but its exact opposite. This precise reason that leads to the questioning by Deleuze (1988), “Why are people so deeply irrational? Why are they proud of their own enslavement? Why do they fight for their bondage (autonomy) as if it were their freedom?” (p. 10).

Concluding Remarks

At the end of this chapter, I wish to emphasize, with Olssen (2010), that even though neo-liberalism’s use of the concept of autonomy alludes to many important qualities (e.g. freedom, rights, morality and justice), it does so in a way that misrepresents the character of social existence and distorts the overall frame of democratic reference in a particular political-ideological direction. Further elaboration of autonomy in relation to neo-liberalism’s politics of individualism and its inextricable relationship with market choice and morality is therefore needed. What is needed also is a revisioning of (educational) democracy and freedom that is mindfully aware of the distinction between authority and authoritarianism as well as the centrality of relationality and social responsibility. This task of elaboration is undertaken in Chapter 3.

Chapter Three:

AUTONOMY AS ACCOUNTABILITY TO CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

This chapter will start with an investigation of how the idea of autonomy relates to neo-liberal politics of individualism and market economy. By making their inextricable relationship explicit, it will become clear that an idea like autonomy is important to neo-liberals only insofar that it is instrumentally valuable. With complete disregard for human interconnectedness, interdependency, insufficiency and vulnerability (MacIntyre, 1999), neo-liberals' use of autonomy distorts the overall frame of democratic reference in favour of its conception of *homo economicus* that views the individual as a rational, self-interested market egoist, who relies solely on, legislates for and takes responsibility for the autonomous self.

On one hand, the normalization of this misconception helps perpetuate the illusion that we are the originating force of our own values and beliefs, the creators of our own lives, independent of the structures of social and institutional support (Olssen, 2010). On the other hand, it helps the furtherance of neo-liberalism's politico-economic doctrine of laissez-faire, framework of active citizenship (citizens as responsible customers), and models of autonomous choice (Olssen, 2005). As a result, the network of complex social structures and beliefs that either favours or disfavours the development of a particular individual from his/her specific conditioning (e.g. class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and accumulated capitals and capabilities) is masked by the alleged self-creating and/or self-determined man.

With regard to education, this shift by which the Taiwanese government appeals to autonomy not only deludes participants with a false conception of personhood and freedom,

but also reinforces the culture of educational authoritarianism and the violence of education (Freire, 2004; Todd, 2001a). This is because an authoritative pedagogy of “learning to become” (Todd, 2001a, p. 432), which presupposes a “coercive subordination of the [individual’s] subjective nature” (Habermas, 1990, p. 207), fails to understand how the development of freedom should assure the emergence of students’ unique singularity, which is largely dependent on educators’ directive authority, rather than authoritarian engineering. Based on the aforementioned reasons, this chapter will argue for a need to develop an alternative, consistent democratic discourse, through a careful rethinking of right, freedom and morality, and a necessary shift of focus from autonomy to relationality and social responsibility.

Politics of Individualism, Market Choice and Morality

Neo-liberalism’s individualistic conception of the autonomous self is argued by Olssen (2010) to be a manifestation of “the arrogance and self-deceiving nature of western phallocentrism, ethnocentrism and class-centrism” (p. 162), which disregards the interconnectedness and interdependence of human life, and exaggerates the extent to which individuals are in control of their environment. Olssen (2010) is in agreement with Hobhouse’s (1991) declaration in which “we start from a situation of non-autonomy, and end in one as well” (cited in Olssen, 2010, p. 161). On this basis, any community members who gain a sense of independence are still far from being autonomous as their value positions, interests and decisions are inevitably balanced with the positions of those they are involved with and care for. This is to say that in reality, nobody can attain a state of autonomy because our thoughts and actions are always already subject to those of other members of society.

Thus, Olssen (2010) challenges neo-liberalism’s insistence on a non-existent autonomy to defend the individual’s exclusive right and freedom. His main contention lies in the fact that

right and freedom, even without autonomy, are still important to the security and well being of each and all; he therefore asks: “In what sense is it accurate or meaningful to identify ‘autonomy’ as the foundation of the architecture to the neglect of other important goods and values, or social processes [?]” (p. 173).

What Olssen (2010) seeks to question is the exclusive emphasis that a neo-liberal state puts on a single value while neglecting others, particularly values such as well-being, dignity, respect and life continuance. In order to explain the primacy of autonomy, it is necessary that we understand the ways that society and its functioning are viewed by neo-liberalism – a politico-economic philosophy that is ultimately based on the politics of individualism and economics of classical mechanics. As a particular branch of economic science, neoclassical economics will be explained in detail in Chapter 6. For now, it suffices to know that such an economic model underpins neo-liberalism’s atomistic individualism.

According to Olssen (2005, 2010), the concept of autonomy is derived from neo-liberalism’s belief in atomistic and possessive individualism. Believing that there is no difference between social science and physical science, complex social phenomena are reduced to the study of individuals, whose life is viewed as independent, proceeding as separated atoms (Fullbrook, 2006). In classical liberalism’s economic model, atomistic individualism overlaps possessive individualism in three natural orders: *individual freedom*, *non-interference*, and *unregulated (market) competition* (Olssen, 2010). From this perspective, society is a mere composition of individuals’ initiatives, and the security of personal right and freedom is indispensable for a society to function well. As an independent entity, each person is viewed as being in possession of personal self and abilities, and thus is solely responsible for himself/herself. Freedom, then, is misconstrued as something gained from independence, free from any relations with others (Olssen, 2010). This, however, is not

to say that a relation with others is never encouraged; it is encouraged insomuch as it develops from commerce and out of self-interest. Such a precondition is due to neo-liberalism conceiving of human society only in terms of the relationship between the market and self-interested individuals (Fullbrook, 2006; Hayek, 1945; Olssen, 2005, 2010). The way society is viewed by early liberal representatives is illustrated by Olssen (2010): “For Adam Smith, it [society] is guided by an ‘invisible hand’. For John Locke society is a ‘joint stock company’ of which individuals are shareholders” (p. 169).

Hence, we may assert that autonomy for neo-liberals is more than the basis of freedom as it is also fundamental to a competitive market order. On the other hand, personal autonomy, right and freedom, supported by liberal politicals such as Levinson (1999) and Reich (2002), should be viewed as a bolster for neo-liberalism’s *laissez faire* principles. Morality in a market-dominated discourse is an exercise of self-governance, through a radical free expression of the individual’s choice (Chan, 2002; Olssen, 2010). By making autonomy the foundation value of the state, “active citizenship”¹⁰ and a “self-help” mentality are normalized and gradually internalized by citizens through socialization. A responsabilized population bears the political obligation that belongs to the state, and this in turn helps the central government to “avoid burdening the republic of the good” (Graham, 2007, p. 206). This can be seen, for example, from the curtailment of social welfare, reduction of the size of the government, privatization of public institutions, promotion of self-reliance, competition, supply and demand market technology, and the furtherance of managerial or enterprise culture (Olssen, 2010). These examples demonstrate neo-liberalism’s deep-rooted market belief that all social goods should or even must be delivered through a means of personal choice, for cost efficiency and accountability.

¹⁰ For this term, refer to Chapter 4, p.72.

With regard to neo-liberalism's construct of morality, I shall contend that the relationship between morality and personal choice, and desires and preferences, is neither synonymous, nor irreducible. What is crucial here is a clear distinction being drawn between our moral and trading experience. The fundamental difference between moral choice and market choice is the extent to which the self is concerned with others or social ethics during his/her decision-making process. Essentially, moral choice is made with our ethical-political responsibility, and this means that the deliberative process is necessarily extended to others, including the way the self's decision might affect others. On the other hand, the deliberative process of market choice is contained by concern for the self, in which choice is to be made in accordance with one's excessive economic calculation.

According to Chan (2002), moral choice for Confucius requires reflexive "thinking, understanding, and willfully embracing, not [mere] picking or selecting" (p. 291), as we would normally act in our engagement with commercial activities. This is because when we are purchasing, it is not righteousness and virtue, but the item's cost, practicality and quality that we are more concerned with. It is important to underscore that this experience, in which we rank our options for a variety of goods and choose the ones that best satisfy our preferences, owes nothing to morality, but only to our purchasing skills. Mei Dan-Cohen captures the essence of moral and trading experience rather well:

our moral experience does not consist in scanning a more or less arbitrarily delimited range of acceptable moral options and then picking out the most attractive member in the set. When we are in the grip of moral truth we are moved by its *intrinsic value* rather than by its *comparative advantage* over other acceptable alternatives (cited in Chan, 2002, p. 291).

Thus, if the comparative advantage is all we need to consider when we engage in commerce, it seems to me that the provision of education (and public service in general) through mechanisms of market and choice is extremely dangerous, because education is distinctively different from other commodities: it is not only a conduit of morality, but is itself a signification of ethicality.

Destabilizing the Autonomous Chooser and the Model of Choice

To make it explicit, the reason for neo-liberalism's faithful adherence to a single concept of autonomy is due to its intrinsic value to capitalism. By insisting on autonomy as a universal human quality, a new consumer identity – *rational autonomous chooser* – is being forged and imposed upon each citizen (Peters, 1996; Peters & Marshall, 1996). This notion of “rational autonomous chooser” embodies a particular conception of human nature (*homo economicus* or rational self-interested, utility maximizer) which assumes that all human beings not only tend to make, but also *want* to make perpetual consumer-style choices (Marshall, 1996). Neo-liberalism's ideology of consumer sovereignty and the fundamental human “faculty of choice” suggest that we, as market egoists, are living insofar as we continuously make informed rational choices for personal optimal benefit (Fitzsimons, 2006); this means it would be unthinkable for us not to value, or to give up our market right to choose (Graham, 2007).

According to Olssen (2010), models of choice are neo-liberals' primary instrument to effect individuals' change in cognitive understanding. Within a choice-based discourse, we are politically and ideologically structured to believe that we are freer and more independent than we really are. Foucault (1972) explains that this autonomous model is indeed ideal – ideal for the control, surveillance and economic systems of the state, but not at all for social caring, cohesion and solidarity. For Foucault (1972), if someone is able to claim complete

independence and freedom, this person's autonomy must be gained at the expense of the necessary social obligation he/she has for other members of the community. In fact, Marshall (1996) has identified that the autonomous chooser, on the theoretical level, has no need to feel a duty to, or consider, other social members. This is because an autonomous model of choice conceives that it is only natural for humans to limit their concern to the self, and compete for (labourer) market survival. Viewing life and freedom through an egoist lens is to endorse Hobbes's understanding of equality: "the equal ability people had for killing one another" (cited in Marshall, 1996, p. 57). It is, for this very reason, that we need to seriously reconsider whether Taiwanese education should be anchored in such a view.

Given that the state perceives citizens' natural tendency is to deliberate upon alternative choices, Taiwanese teachers, since the 2005 reform, have been responsible for choosing between alternative textbooks on the basis of their students' growth patterns and needs. Parents, on the other hand, are responsible for choosing between competing educational institutions according to the nature and aptitude of their children. The perceived merits of providing educational choice are explicitly stated by the Government Information Office (2005):

the past few years have seen significant improvements in Taiwan's educational system. Many longstanding problems, such as the JPSHS and JUEE [National Joint University Entrance Examination] have been addressed... students [,teachers and parents] have been offered a greater number of *choices*... These developments have strengthened the education system by raising its standards even higher (p. 19).

The centre believes that education quality is enhanced and will continuously improve by simply providing stakeholders with more choices. What seems preposterous is the

government's assumption that the problem of the National Joint University Entrance Examination has already been solved by implementation of the Multiple Entrance System (MOE, 2007a). Such a system, as I have critiqued in Chapter 1, operates in accordance with a capitalist mindset and thus has very limited, if any, capacity to address the problems of academic peer competition and educational inequality. With complete disregard for the need to address essential structural issues, the provision of more educational choices will no doubt continue to advantage those already in a privileged position, while in the meantime depriving their less advantaged counterparts of the opportunity to move up the social ladder.

Even though there is a lack of social commitment to the concept of autonomy, many liberal philosophers of education, such as Dearden (1972) and Levinson (1999), maintain that education should aim at cultivating students' autonomy. This has a lot to do with these theorists' conception of the psychological theories of individual development and growth. In these theories, students are perceived as having the potential to be self-directive and eventually to actualize themselves, insofar as they are given opportunities to choose in accordance with their "self-formulated" values and beliefs. Self-realization is presumed to be the desire of all students, and it is thus important for education to fulfill the interests and needs of each. This view is shared by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (2006a):

according to American psychologist Maslow, humans seek to fulfill the hierarchy of needs in the order of psychology, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization...[hence] educators should aim to develop *self-realizing* modern citizens (p. 1)... [learning materials are to] be coordinated to fit the abilities, tendencies, interests and needs of students (p. 2)...[in order to] bring out the most of individual potential to complete oneself. The completion of oneself is the completion of the nation (p. 6).

Because Taiwanese education has long been subject to an authoritarian, teacher-dominated discourse, this shift to self-directive, student-centred learning indeed seems to be an improvement, in that individual students' distinctive aptitudes and viewpoints are acknowledged. The underlying assumption is that an empowered student would have more capacity to self-organize his/her studies, and this self-managed ability represents his/her true independence (autonomy) from external authority. Nevertheless, Freire and Shor (1987) reject the possibility of self-liberation, for its individualistic nature is insufficient to see how liberation is, in and of itself, a social activity, dependent on collective intelligence and the empowerment of all. Equally refuted by Freire and Shor (1987) is a self-directive education that inclines towards a *laissez-faire* position. A *laissez-faire* approach to pedagogy fails to provide the structure, direction and purpose necessary for developing students' "taste for freedom" (Freire & Macedo, 1996, p. 151). These theorists perceive that educators always have the directive responsibility, yet their authority to direct is only legitimate if it is aimed at educational processes and objectives and not students.

My argument has somewhat different foci from that of Freire and Shor (1987). Based on the ambiguity embedded within the language of interests and needs, as well as the Taiwanese cultural value of "respect for authority" (as a form of blind obedience), I question the possibility of students determining their own aspirations and learning. Most students in Taiwan are well-accustomed to their role as docile subjugated; they know very well how to submit to the face of authoritarian authorities¹¹. It seems highly likely that the students,

¹¹ Authoritarian authority is one that places excessive limits on students' free activity and thus is unable to structure open dialogue, critical reflection and transformative action (Roberts, 2000, 2001). The use of "authoritarian authority", then, is to emphasize its authoritarian essence which must not be confused with the "democratic authority" that is advocated and practised by Freire.

lacking encouragement and courage, will not defend their right and freedom if parents and teachers reject their views and re-direct their learning needs and interests. And if what students really desire is replaced by the value positions of their teachers and parents, to what extent can we claim that they are free, autonomous and self-directive learners? As Foucault explicates:

the man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a *subjection* much more profound than himself...these practices are not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in the *culture* and which are proposed, suggested, and *imposed* on him by his culture, his society and his social group (cited in Olssen, 2005, p. 375).

Further, even if parents and teachers are able to direct students' needs, I would argue that their choices are still far from being autonomous in that they are structured by socio-economic factors and manipulated by the political ideologies of the state. As Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995) point out, the essential use of autonomy is to have choice – choice that is often misrepresented as “free of manipulation” and thus neutral, independent and classless. Essentially, neo-liberalism idealizes *responsible consumerism*, through its dogmatic prescriptions of what it means to be responsible parents or what behaviours responsible parents would perform. Responsible parents, in the simplest form, are those who devote a great deal of time and energy to ensuring that the “right” decision is being made; this suggests that parents who fail to make the right choice either have some deficiencies in their rational nature or some kind of social pathology, that is, personal irresponsibility (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995).

Nevertheless, choice systems in reality have nothing to do with personal autonomy or responsibility, in that different social classes' faulty choice or ability to choose is predominantly determined by their accumulated economic, social and cultural capitals (Gewritz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Wikinson & Pickett, 2010). This is to say that what the chooser chooses may not always reflect his/her *authentic* needs and *actual* interests. Neo-liberalism's use of choice systems, Gewritz, Ball and Bowe (1995) argue, is simply for "maintaining and indeed reinforcing social-class divisions and inequalities" (p. 23). On the other hand, the choices of teachers are largely determined by the state-regulated teaching manual and curriculum guideline (with government-selected worthy knowledge and skills). Following external principles in terms of what to teach, how to teach, what to assess and how to assess, teachers are rendered mere passive technicians, dependent on the authoritarian heteronomy. Consequently, not only is the chooser non-autonomous, his/her choice is also heteronomously circumscribed. This then leads to my question: in what sense is it accurate for the Taiwanese government to assume an identity of autonomous chooser and a model of autonomous choice?

Autonomy as a Reinforcement of Educational Authoritarianism and Violence

The government's appeal to autonomy not only seeks to infuse citizens with an egoistic conception of selfhood and freedom, but also reinforces the violence *of* Taiwanese education. As Levinson (1999) asserts unambiguously: "for the state to foster children's development of autonomy requires coercion" (p. 38). This implies that students need not be encouraged to develop their unique individuality, yet they must be "helped" to develop a universal, impersonal being (rational autonomy), regardless of their unwillingness. For Habermas (1990), this "coercive subordination of the [individual's] subjective nature" (p. 207) demonstrates that the process of autonomy development is inherently violent and therefore unethical and unjust. The central paradox of autonomy development is that it presupposes

authoritarian heteronomy, or, to put it differently, it seeks to free individual students through compulsion. Interestingly, even Kant himself found such a contradiction unthinkable: “how do I cultivate freedom through coercion?” (cited in Biesta, 1998, p. 4).

Within an autonomy-oriented (neo)liberal education, teachers are legitimized to exert their conventional authoritarian force upon the student subject to *become*. Students are to become independent of social influences and communal interests in order to actualize the alleged human end of reason. Notwithstanding Levinson (1999) claims that autonomy means to free individual students under self-given laws, autonomy is not at all liberating, for it helps strengthen an authoritarian educational discourse. For Freire (2004), it is indispensable for educators to have a certain form of authority in a pedagogical context, yet this form must be carefully distinguished from authoritarianism. Being imposed on quietism, students’ sense of pride and self-worth is eradicated, thereby negating their unique selves and their freedom to oppose, to decide, to choose, and to resist.

Teachers’ authority, Freire and Macedo (1996) argue, is “an invention of freedom so that freedom may continue to be....Authority, then, makes no sense and is not justifiable if it loses its principal task: to assure freedom the possibility of being” (pp. 150-151). This possibility, Freire (2004) continues, derives from “lucidly and ethically assuming limits, not from fearfully and blindly obeying them [authority]” (p. 10). Freedom in education is therefore neither submissive nor permissive. It is by living within the tense relationship between freedom and authority that we learn ethical limits – limits that are necessary for each to assume, if education means to be democratically liberating.

On the other hand, Todd (2001a) argues that this authoritative pedagogy of “learning to become” (p. 432) is fundamentally ignorant of the *becoming* state of humanity and the

oppression inaugurated by its pre-specified, standardized learning destination (e.g. rational autonomy). In this oppressive model, education is not understood as a site of *applied ethics*, but one of *implied ethics*, meaning that ethics are not thought *through* education, but education is thought in relation to the normative principles of ethics. Thus, the contingencies of ethical conditions, such as the vulnerability or the need that students reveal, are often neglected by the teacher-technician. Informed by Levinas' philosophical thinking, Todd (2001a) perceives pedagogy as something much more than the teaching of morals as it is itself a "moral vision" (p. 436). Accordingly, the first question we need to ask about education is not what students should or must become, but what makes ethics or justice possible in the first place. Ethicality in education is essentially based on a mode of *relationality* – a non-violent, ethical relationship the self has to Others (Biesta, 2004c; Todd, 2001a) - in which the unique singularity of students is not denied, but attended and responded to with teachers' and peers' sensitive receptivity and responsibility.

Democracy: Not Autonomy but Social Responsibility and Relationality

(Neo)liberalism's ideology of autonomy, which overemphasizes individual sovereignty, is followed with an underrepresentation of the socio-historical nature of personhood. From Olssen's (2010) perspective, it is precisely this mutual dependency of human beings that "early liberalism has in toto systematically failed to theorize, or...even see" (p. 173). The obscureness of our interconnectedness and interdependency leads to an understatement of the ethical duties that we owe to each other, thereby sanctioning irresponsible and disrespectful forms of conduct. For MacIntyre (1999), what is regrettably absent in neo-liberal political philosophy are the central features of *insufficiency*, *vulnerability*, and *disability* in human life. As he explicates: "It is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing...[we need virtue]...if we are to confront and respond to vulnerability and disability both in ourselves and in others" (pp. 4-5).

Thus, we may assert that a disembodied, independent self who autonomously determines personal accomplishment is nothing more than a fiction in MacIntyre's (1999) view.

Permeating much of the Western subject, this illusion of self-sufficiency fails to recognize how the achievement of individuals is preponderantly assisted by a network of complex social structures and beliefs. That is, others are not unrelated, but essentially integral to our own survival and well-being. Consequently, if our lives are to continue, to flourish and to develop virtuously, it would be better that we conceive lives to be meaningful insofar as we commit to others, not on the basis of market ethics, but on the basis of our freedom to be responsible for social ethics and democratic justice.

With that said, democracy must not be reduced to protect individuals' market right and private interests. This is because the motives which spur people to act are, more often than not, involved with an element of the social and not simply self-interest (Gilbert, 2005; Olssen, 2010). Given our inextricable relationality, Todd (2009) suggests we rethink right not as our inherent entitlement, but as our *unconditional responsibility* to and for the vulnerability of Others. Central to this Levinasian-informed responsibility is our freedom to move beyond self-interest and attend to the needs of Others. Even though Levinas might oppose Confucius' view of social responsibility as a developmental process that gradually expands from the kinship family to outer humanity, my point here is to identify the importance of not limiting our attentiveness to our immediate surroundings and members of ours.

In fact, Foucault (2001) seems to agree with Confucius in this respect. Foucault (2001) states that the social obligation we inherit shall be extended beyond the borders of families, communities and nations, and every world citizen shall be obliged to: "speak out against

every abuse of power, whoever its author, whoever its victims. After all, we are all members of the community of the governed, and thereby obliged to show mutual solidarity” (p. 474). For Foucault (2001), this practice of absolute right as socio-political responsibility awakens our freedom from eternal sleep. Along this line of thinking, we may assert that prior to our engagement with our political agency to and for Others, there is neither freedom to be claimed, nor gained.

Clearly, democracy for Foucault (2001) is not moderate (as it would fall into reactionism), nor is it dependent on autonomy; it is instead radical in nature, constructed upon the principles of “government by the people” and “mature criticism”, in which contradictory social realities are analyzed carefully and possible alternatives envisaged morally. Nevertheless, critical criticism must be accompanied by substantial changes in social structures if our aim is to develop a radically democratic state. As no individual human being is able to survive unsupported, it is necessary that we reverse the (neo)liberal mentality: the development of all citizens ought to be the precondition for the development and freedom of individuals and not vice versa (Olssen, 2010). In this radical model of democracy, the specific protection is not only given to citizens’ right and entitlements, but also to our duties for each other. The acknowledgement of human insufficiency, vulnerability and (inter)dependency demands robust social structures, wherein the interests and life continuance of each and all are taken into account and taken care of.

Therefore social welfare and political structures of institutional support must be provided in accordance with the principle of fairness and equity, so that all citizens are ensured of sustainable well-being. In *Liberalism, Neoliberalism, Social democracy: Thin Communitarian Perspectives on Political Philosophy and Education*, Olssen (2010) has identified seven principles of fairness and equity, and I have adapted these and reduced them

to six to suggest an alternative political structure for Taiwan: (1) the maintenance of basic living standards for all; (2) the (re)distribution of wealth, income and resources, so that all are able to participate and flourish; (3) equal opportunity for all, such as equality of educational access, processes and success; (4) the development of citizens' democratic capacities; (5) rights to contestation and exit; and (6) safety and security.

It is important to emphasize again that the practice of freedom, underpinned by our ethical-political duty to alleviate human misery, does not rely on autonomy, but on our mature judgment, critical criticism and ongoing debate that is inaugurated on the basis of an *ethical* relationship we have with Others. Education informed by this line of thinking would not concern itself with the development of students' autonomy in that it recognizes autonomy as a political-ideological manacle of human freedom. It would recognize that the formation of the subject necessarily has no end stage. Thus, a true liberating, democratic education would not only provide students with the necessary resources, critical capacities (literacy, thinking, and inquiry) and political and instrumental skills, but also shift the current oppressive pedagogy of *learning to become* to a transcendent pedagogy of *learning to becoming*. We as educators are involved in the important subjectification process of individual students, and therefore the ways we facilitate the becoming of each cannot be monistic and rigid as though educational activities can be unproblematically standardized or planned out prior to our actual classroom encounter with students.

Given the ethical, political nature of education, I would suggest learning experiences being designed to help students to develop social ethics, political agency, and the connection of relationships between their immediate environment and the larger national and global contexts. This could be done by learning how (unequal) power works in societies, the possibilities and limits of the practice of freedom, and the many possible ways to respond to

alterity. I would argue that the critical and responsible education desired by the Taiwanese government would be better realized on the basis of a radical form of democracy, through a reconceptualization of rights, freedom and morality, and the development of students' *epistemological curiosity* and *respond-ability*, rather than mere rational autonomy. It is only when students no longer shy away from, but come forth to receive and respond to the questions posed by Others, such as teachers or peers, that their epistemological curiosity can be stimulated and sustained alongside their dialogical scrutiny. Further, it is through this open, dynamic, reflective and rigorous dialogical space that individual students are enabled to learn *from* difference, while at the same time, revealing their unique, irreplaceable individuality.

Chapter Four:

RATIONAL PROGRESS AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCIALIZATION

As argued in previous chapters, the Taiwanese government's shift to an ideal of rational autonomy manifests its uncritical westernization¹², or more specifically, its neo-liberal approach. Such an approach is, however, not new to the state because it has been practised since the 1960s during the KMT Government's administration, as evident in the trade agreement between the KMT Government and the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) (Tsai, 1999). The aim of this chapter, then, is to provide a socio-historical overview of the formation of a neo-liberal world polity, and to demonstrate how the state's developmental decisions have been historically structured, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, by the triadic, yet inextricable hegemonic forces of globalization, neo-liberalism and liberal humanism.

By employing Boli and Thomas' (1997) theory of world polity, Boli's (2005) theory of world culture, and Maringe and Foskett's (2010) theory of neo-liberal globalization, the way neo-liberalism's notion of *progress* is supported by liberal humanists' conception of *rational autonomy* will be critically analyzed, alongside changes in the centre's philosophy of governance in the socio-political and socio-economic fields. In a world polity informed by neo-liberalism, global/regional authorities positioned at the privileged top end order Others in lower positions to actively engage with what the authorities perceive as irrefutable progress, namely, progressive international/national economic development and growth. Such progress is to be made in accordance with Western ways of being, knowing, thinking

¹² According to Maringe and Foskett (2010), *westernization* refers to the rise of an isomorphic world system – structures, ideologies, and cultural practices – underwritten by the dominant countries in the West.

and doing that are ultimately based on scientific, rational management, free-market capitalism and/or “humanitarian assistencialization” (Freire, 2004, p. xxii).

Regardless of its changing language from “civilization” in the Age of Enlightenment to “modernization” in the present day (Tully, 2008), neo-liberalism’s humanitarian assistencialization, which demands that politically and economically weaker states accept their superiors’ benevolent aid in the form of specialists, agents and material resources (Beckfield, 2008, 2010), is itself embedded within dehumanizing oppression: its totalizing philosophy not only views Others through a deficit lens, but also negates the freedom and right of Others to be different (Freire, 2004). It is, for this precise reason, that the end of this chapter will argue that the struggle against neo-liberalism’s structured global/national poverty and inequalities, first and foremost, requires the national government and its citizens to gain a fundamental understanding of what these inequalities actually constitute. This understanding in turn shows that what is crucial in a democratic and just world polity/society is not assistencialization, but each nation’s/individual’s ethical-political responsibility to and for Other nations/people (Biesta, 2007a; Levinas, 1998a, 2001), so that Other nations/people will come to see how their success and/or failure is not an inevitable reality, but a reality inevitably shaped by social, structural conditioning (Freire, 1996, 1997b, 1998a, 2004).

Neo-Liberal Globalism: Top-Down Political and Economic Globalization

Constituted by the hegemonic discourse of the West, neo-liberalism is argued by Olssen and Peters (2005) to be a “politically [and economically] imposed discourse” (p. 314) on nation states in which their boundaries are minimized, perhaps even diminished, by their interdependency and interconnectedness in the political, economic, social, cultural and technological domains. What this demonstrates is that there is no substantial difference

between the concepts of globalization and neo-liberalism in that both are characterized by the same politico-economic driving force, namely, *free market capitalism*. As Friedman (1999) notes:

the more you let market forces rule and the more you open your economy to free trade and competition, the more efficient your economy will be. Globalization means the spread of free market capitalism to virtually every country in the world (p. 9).

In agreement, Maringe and Foskett (2010) advance a theory of neo-liberal globalization. This theory underpins the notion of “neo-liberal globalism” and views globalization from a particular “top-down” perspective (known as globalization from above) in which the top refers to those who are in possession of the globalizing/nationalizing power, politically and economically capable of establishing a world polity with the New World Orders. Singh, Kenway and Apple (2005) argue that the logic underpinning the New World Orders is “[either live] according to neoliberal prescriptions or perish” (p. 3), and these prescriptions in turn are chiefly grounded in an “ideology of rule of the world market” (p. 3).

A world polity informed by the neo-liberal order tends to blur the distinction between politics and economics to enable a global-state-market condition to be established. Because those who are positioned at the top and influential in framing the world-culture and social reality largely constitute global authorities (e.g. the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and their core Western-European states, the international order is more often than not designed for their own benefit, whereas the participation of the peripheral states, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, is limited to their engagement in the global economy

and labour market (Beckfield, 2010). In addition to these global authorities, I also wish to emphasize the profound impact of the regionalizing hegemony, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), on the Taiwanese government's policy decisions; this will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Rational Progress: Economic Development and Growth

With regard to the neo-liberal globalizing force, or what Freire (1996) would term the “oppressive” force, its locus lies in the notion of *progress* which was fully developed during the Age of Enlightenment. The idea of progress is inextricably linked to early liberals' belief in “reductionist rationalism” (Boli & Thomas, 1997, p. 171), and used initially to refer to a nation state's rational development of economy. Such a rationality or autonomy based cultivation, as explicated in Chapter 2, was unproblematically extended by Plato to individuals in relation to their personal development and growth (Olssen, 2005). For Levinas, the idea that progress presupposes rational autonomy entails: “the recognition of an invariable essence named ‘Man’, the affirmation of his central place in the *economy* of the Real and of his value which [engenders] all values” (cited in Biesta, 2009a, p. 357).

Levinas' comment reaffirms that the use of rational autonomy in a neo-liberal discourse is heavily, if not purely economically oriented. As Boli (2005) points out in his world culture theory, progress for neo-liberalists simply means “rising GDP/capital, increased consumption and consumer choice, [and] self-augmenting technological development” (p. 395). As a result of neo-liberalism's adherence to economic rationalism and reductionism, the multidimensionality of globalization and social life is reduced to a single, economic dimension, whereby the intricate social relationship is redefined through a sole market logic (Boli & Thomas, 1997).

In their (neo-liberal) world polity theory, Boli and Thomas (1997) indicate further that whether or not progress can be made is ultimately dependent on the extent to which the individual state and citizen are rationalized and scientized. This is because “rational social action” is perceived by neo-liberalism as “the route to equality, comfort, and the good life” (p. 181). Consequently, “all sorts of collective purposes” can be achieved by no other way than “rational production and distribution” (p. 181). Thus, the applicability and desirability of scientific, objective methods and techniques, such as system analysis, and economic principles and formulae, need not be publicly debated or questioned; rather, they must be embedded within the developmental process of global/national administrations, organizations, and educational institutions if they are to progress at all.

Scientific and Rational System Analysis in Taiwan

Western values in rational, scientific methods were introduced to Taiwan shortly after the end of the Korean War. According to the Taiwanese Council for Economic Planning and Development (CEPD) report *Analysis of Supply and Demand for Manpower: 2005-2015* (2006), USAID played a critical role from the 1960s to the 1970s in “assistencializing” the state’s economy during its industrial transformation. The first Taiwanese Manpower Resource Department was soon positioned and engaging with the scientific techniques set out by USAID to design a series of civilized/modernized agendas. Of these techniques, the method of system analysis is the one that is still being currently practised by the centre (CEPD, 2006). Grounded in mechanistic behaviourism, the method of system analysis perceives that human behaviours or actions cannot be otherwise as they are structured by external stimuli (Hoos, 1972). In the pursuit of temporal certainty, system analysis is primarily used to plan for national manpower or human resources, through analyzing the relationship between macro-models of education (the supply side) and the international/national labour market condition (the demand side). Tien (1996), a local

researcher, argues that it is through the use of system analysis that Taiwanese students are pre-sorted on the basis of their *natural abilities* and then distributed to either a vocational or academic educational track.

Deriving from Plato's philosophy of education, the concept of ability has been historically used to decide in advance whether a child should study traditional disciplines or be given practical skills training (Gilbert, 2005). Ability was commonly perceived as a "fixed quantity of something" (p. 80) specific to the individual, so it is only natural that some people would have more than others. This understanding of ability is reflected in the Ministry of Education's (2007a) assumption that "the pursuit of theory and thought is the focus of the upper class whereas the learning of practical skills is that of the lower class" (p. 9).

Notwithstanding this particular interpretation of ability is essentially a mid-twentieth century perspective and informed by measuring children's intelligence in verbal linguistics and logical mathematics, Gilbert (2005) argues that such a definition is still rooted in our mental models of postmodern education and evident in international academic comparative studies, such as the International Mathematics and Science study (TIMSS) and the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Within a scientific discourse, students' equal educational opportunities and chances to succeed in life are largely undermined as their future is being pre-programmed and pre-determined in a rational, dogmatic way. According to Zhou (2003), making and implementing policies on the basis of system analysis not only subverts educational equality, but also quality in Taiwanese education. This can be seen, for example, from a survey conducted in 1976 where the three-quarters of Taiwanese students who scored lower on the

National Joint University Entrance Examination were compelled to either enrol in the vocational track or engage early with the job market because of the policy on vocational/academic student ratio (7 vocational students: 3 academic students) (Tien, 1996). Moreover, the policy incentives provided to encourage the establishment of secondary vocational institutions led to rapid expansion (at an average rate of 7 institutions annually from 1963-1972), which in turn generated the problems of faculty and facility under-resourcing (Tien, 1996).

Disregarding the empirical evidence provided by local researchers, CEPD (2006) officials insist that this technical, systemic approach to manpower calculation and planning is value-free and thus equitable, given that its measurement on the quantifiable inputs and outputs is objectively neutral. The centre's rhetorical assumption has to do with the limitations of its economic concern with the reduction of temporary uncertainty and the improvement of efficiency in policy making and educational processes. In radical opposition, Biesta (2010b), Hoos (1972) and Lyotard (1984) argue that this search for "certainty" through scientific rationality is itself unwarranted and dehumanizing to the extent that it disregards the inherent differences between physical (natural) and social science. This counter-argument will be explicated further in Chapter 7 with respect to neo-liberalism's mythicized technicism and scientism.

Western Humanitarian Assistancialization

As one of the building blocks of neo-liberalism, liberal humanism postulates a universal "norm of humanness" (Biesta, 2009a, p. 358) regarding what it means to be human. In respect to this norm, I wish to extend it to refer to "what it means to be a human society". This extension, I believe, would be helpful to our understanding of the essence of neo-liberalism's "humanitarian assistancialization" (Freire, 2004, p. xxii). In an

assistencializing discourse, nation states' rational, autonomous ability to develop economy is perceived as the marker of human society. Hence, any nation that cannot or is unable to live up to this norm is viewed as an *inhuman* society, or to put it another way, an *inferior* human society, which then necessitates their superior counterparts' assistencialization for it to be humanized and make progress. What this suggests is that neo-liberalism and its humanist stance perceive Other nations do not only *want*, but also *need* to act in concert with its rational, scientific ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing. It is precisely this totalization that enabled Western-European states to legitimately implement a series of "humanizing" projects in non-European societies during the Age of Enlightenment.

Underlying the intended beneficence of these civilizing projects was Adam Smith's free trade principle and Kant's cosmopolitan right that stated the host country's duty is to open its door to welcome free commerce or be punished by either diplomacy or military intervention under international law (Tully, 2008). Under Western-European-dominated trade laws, non-European societies were expected to liberalize their economy and accept their superiors' humanitarian aid in the form of specialists, agents, and/or material resources (Beckfield, 2010). Tully (2008) therefore argues that humanitarian assistencialization has been a de facto instrument of the West to legally consolidate its hegemonic status. Thus, Western agents were able to:

travel to non-Western countries to first, study and classify their different customs and ways into developmental stages of different societies and races, and, second, to try to free them from their "inferior" ways and teach them the uniquely civilized ways of the West [so as to] to engage in "commerce" (trade) with the inhabitants: to enter into contracts and treaties, gain access to resources, buy slaves, hire and discipline laborers, establish trading posts, and so on (p. 22).

As mentioned earlier, Taiwan's scientific, rational approach to managing the supply and demand of manpower is due to the "baptism" of USAID. USAID's large-scale humanizing missions did not, however, cease at the phase of manpower planning, but extended to the overall political economy of the state. Prior to the trade agreement with USAID, Taiwan was a centrally-controlled and protectionist polity, demonstrated by its tremendously high tariffs of 32% charged on imported goods in the early 1960s (Tsai, 1999). The practice of high tariffs ensured local workers' and producers' working and living stability, which was conducive to the KMT Government's long-term political aim of recovering mainland China.

Nevertheless, as the KMT Government shifted its focus to the development of the national economy, this practice of imposing tariffs became an obstacle to the establishment of commercial links with the world. Seizing the business opportunity, USAID suggested the KMT officials "free" the economy by actively developing private sectors so as to attract foreign investors and ensure the engagement of the Taiwanese citizens with economic activities (Tsai, 1999). Additional financial aid of US\$ 20-30 million was also offered by USAID as an "exchange" for the centre's shifting political and economic paradigms (Tsai, 1999). As a result, the KMT Government implemented a neo-liberal policy, the *Nineteen-Point Programme of Economic and Financial Reform*, which encompassed several sub-reform policies, including *Savings Movement*, *Capital Financing*, *Income Tax Law*, *The Act for the Encouragement of Investment*, *The Tariff Law* and *The Law of Inheritance and Gifts* to encourage commerce and economic liberalization (Ministry of Finance, 2009).

According to Tsai (1999), what underlay USAID's humanitarian assistencialization was its politico-economic aim to incorporate Taiwan as one of its pillars in the great "Pacific Crescent", while in the meantime restructuring the state's economy into one largely

self-sustaining, yet still to some extent dependent. Despite their distinct motives beyond the trade agreement, KMT functionaries were complicit with USAID in revamping the state's socio-economic structure on the basis of a capitalist, market logic. For the KMT officials, there is an absolute correlation between global trading and increased profit in that the state's revenue largely relies on exports. Indeed, the trade agreement benefited both Taiwan and the United States, which is evident in the export expansion as well as the trade surplus escalation: Taiwan's exports to the U.S. increased from 11.5 percent to 21 percent during the 1960s, and the trade surplus rose from US\$ 200 million in the 1970s to US\$16 billion in the 1980s (Tsai, 1999).

These considerable profits were not, however, gained unconditionally. One example is the KMT Government's pre-reduction of tariffs from an average of 32% to 8.5% (Tsai, 1999). Another example is that the state had to supply the United States with a certain number of low-priced human resources (Tsai, 1999). These extensive changes in the regulations should not be automatically perceived as being imposed on the KMT Government, as Tsai (1999) asserts in *Geopolitics, the State, and Political Economy of Growth in Taiwan*. Instead, a more pertinent account is provided by Hirst (2000):

What is supposed to be an inevitable market-driven global process is actually substantially a product of public policy... it was influential economic policy elites and state officials in advanced states that shaped the deregulatory free-market vision of world trade (p. 179).

In other words, even though Taiwan's sovereignty was somewhat curtailed by the global superpower, it would be naïve to think that the state would relinquish its sovereign

capacities. Rather, it would seek ways to “harmonize [national] policies and laws [with those of the transnational] to ensure the effectiveness of measures taken at the national level” (Olssen, 2004, p. 242).

Given world trade is, more often than not, followed with further regulations, Olssen (2004) argues that the idea of a “free” market is fundamentally illusionary, deceptive and oppressive. Embedded within the alleged humanitarian assistencialization, a free trade agreement reinforces and perpetuates “western imperialism” at the expense of politically and economically weaker societies (Tully, 2008). For this very reason, Freire (1997b, 2004) accepts neither humanitarianism nor assistencialization. Freire (2004) is adamant that any moral actions inaugurated by thinking that “begin[s] with the egotistic interests of the oppressors” (p. xxii), makes the oppressed into mere objects of humanitarian assistencialization. As “an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism,” humanitarian assistencialization “itself maintains and embodies oppression” (p. xxii). It is, Freire (2004) concludes powerfully, “an instrument of dehumanization” (p. xxii).

A Socio-Historical Overview: The Formation of a Neo-Liberal World Polity

In Boli and Thomas’ (1997) world polity theory and Boli’s (2005) world culture theory, the world is being deciphered as an increasingly integrated, singular international polity. The dense interconnected contemporary global network makes it difficult, if not impossible to separate the close relationship between nation states’ politics, economy, culture and social life, and it enables the rules and agreements achieved by neo-liberal global/regional authorities to acquire the characteristic of universal laws (Boli & Thomas, 1997; Boli, 2005). Even though the theories of world culture and polity proposed by Boli (2005) and Boli and Thomas (1997) view the neo-liberal order and laws as being diffused according to a central-peripheral pattern, their essence should, however, be understood as compatible with

Maringe and Foskett's (2010) theory of neo-liberal globalization. Whether the international laws are disseminated from the central to the peripheral states, or from the states at the top to those at the bottom, they both account for "a unitary social system" (Boli & Thomas, 1997, p. 172), wherein the isomorphism of homogeneous national structures is readily growing in the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural arenas.

Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) have argued that within a neo-liberal world discourse, national policies for social re-structuring lean towards capitalist ideals of democracy and freedom, so that the market-economic domain becomes, as Beckfield (2010, p. 1028) puts it, "increasingly densely integrated, increasingly decentralized, [in sum, an] increasingly small world polity". This can be seen, for example, from the Taiwanese government's policy promotion of educational decentralization and consumerism, and competitive, entrepreneurial individualism (MOE, 2006a, 2006c, 2006d, 2007a, 2009a), which in turn shape the actions of postmodern educational institutions and their respective participants. With regard to the unfading hegemony of neo-liberalism, we should question what it is that allows neo-liberal ideas to flourish in the initial stage; or to put it differently, what is the contextual reality in the specific socio-historical time and place that propels most nation states to shift their politico-economic paradigm from a welfare state to a neo-liberal state? In order to answer this question, let us go back to the 1970s when the global world suffered from oil and economic crises.

During the 1970s, reduced consumption in recessive global economy resulted in limited production and many unemployed working class citizens from the manufacturing and transportation sectors (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). The dramatic economic downturn was utilized by corporate entities to attack the welfare state policies adhered to by industrialized nations during the 1950s and 1960s. A welfare state which undertook its moral

and social responsibility to minimize the socio-economic risks faced by the workers and the economically disadvantaged was incompatible with the nature of business interests and profits, and therefore was claimed to be simply engaged with “damage control” (Taylor et al., p. 59). High inflation and the devastating economic recession were thus regarded as problems engendered by a government that inappropriately interfered with the market mechanism and its “neutral” principles (Young, 1990). Accordingly, when a welfare paradigm was conceived to be counterproductive to the development of the global/national economy, the need for its existence was questioned and refuted.

Following the decline of social welfarism was the rise of classical economic liberalism, which was the predecessor of neo-liberalism. Among all the classical economic liberalists or Second Way politicians, the most well-known representatives are Margaret Thatcher, Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, who safeguarded “active citizenship” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 68) and a utilitarian, laissez-faire policy framework on the grounds of *welfare independency*. Characterized by a pure economic relationship between the state and citizens, active citizenship constitutes individual citizens into committed workers and independent consumers of public services (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). In this depoliticized framework of citizenry, individuals can no longer expect ample support from the central government as they are now the subjects of their choices, meaning that they are responsible for the decisions they made for their life-course. Subjugating social ethics to individual entrepreneurism and free-market capitalism, this Social Darwinist mentality (survival of the fittest) regrounds justice in meritocracy, so that whoever fails can only fatalistically accept his/her failure as the consequence of personal incompetence or inability to make the “right” decisions (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004).

As a result, the neo-liberal state is not only legitimized to attribute the cause of the poor's financial difficulties to the poor themselves, but also suggest to the poor their initiative is the only way to improve their own impoverishment (Biesta, 2004a). For example, a new social security scheme which consisted of a new social insurance programme and a social assistance scheme followed the KMT Government's *Nineteen-Point Programme of Economic and Financial Reform* (Ministry of Finance, 2009). According to Chang (2005), a social security payment from the former, given as an incentive for those in work, is determined by the working citizen's occupational group (which means no job, no social security payment), whereas the latter provides a limited monthly subsidy of NTD\$ 6000 (NZD\$ 240) to unemployed citizens on the condition that they are seeking job opportunities and able to prove that they have no other working family members to support them. Such a work-based social security scheme that disregards the mounting social and economic risks faced by the disadvantaged is in fact being proliferated by the state moving into a "productivist" postmodernity. As this needs to be understood in the context of the emergence of Third Way politics, it will be more fully explained and demonstrated in Chapter 8.

Global Poverty and Inequalities

It is important to emphasize that even though the trade agreement between the KMT Government and USAID benefited both parties to some degree, I by no means intend to justify Western-Eurocentrism or their use of hegemonic trade. Global/national inequalities that manifest through the degenerated social context of the Majority World (or the Third World), Beckfield (2008) argues, are by and large the material effects of the "policy scripts" (p. 421) of the global/regional authorities. These horrific material effects are all-encompassing, ranging from massive environmental destruction, sweatshop working conditions, spiraling debt, underpaid labourers, increased economic insecurity, and alarming hunger and riots, to marginalized ways of being (Peters, 2003). According to *Green Left*

Weekly (“United States: ‘Fair trade’”, 2000) and Henry (2008), Third World debt to the First World banks increased from US\$576 billion in 1980 to US\$1.4 trillion in 1992, and then to US\$2.5 trillion by the year 2000. Thus, the question we need to ask about enlightened moral norms and humanitarian assistencialization is, if they are truly expressions of social caring, why is half of humankind still suffering from poverty? For Shiva (1998), this has to do with the “global” in neo-liberal-dominated discourse that does not represent universal human interest at all, but “a particular local and parochial interest...in which a particular dominant local seeks global control, and frees itself of local, national and international restraints” (p. 231).

In order to ensure the secureness of its exclusive interests, the neo-liberal hegemony has been implementing, since the Age of Enlightenment, a colonial form of governance which Foucault (1977) analogized as a “panopticon” (p. 195). Nevertheless, as societies move from the modern to postmodern era, such a “colonial governance” (Tully, 2008, p. 25) is in need of a new expression as the traditional mode of colonialism is too unambiguously explicit. The new expression is then found in a more implicit ideological domination which is evident in the late 1990s when the United Nation replaced its language of “civilization” with that of “modernization”, “marketization”, “internationalization” and/or “democratization” (Tully, 2008). With regard to this replacement, Taylor et al. (1997) argue that it is simply a language game which manipulates vocabulary and hence human consciousness, in that its grammatical structures of rational progression and free-market capitalism remain unchanged.

Indeed, as the predominant neo-liberal apparatus, the United Nations (1992), although recognizing the exacerbated “working poor” phenomenon within and across countries, insists that member states should “go beyond basic concerns of human survival and invest

heavily in all levels of human capital formation – particularly in technical and managerial skill” (p. 41) in order to seize greater control in the development of a preeminent knowledge economy. For Levinas, these “inhuman events of recent history” demonstrate the “crisis of [liberal] humanism in our society” (cited in Biesta, 2009a, p. 358), that is, its inability to fight effectively against its own inhumanities. Lacking a crucial commitment to social ethic and caring, a neo-liberal world polity does not eradicate, but reinforces the perpetuation of global/national poverty and inequalities. Hence, Pogge (2008) urges each and every world citizen to problematize such an unjust order, through our undertaking of “serious conscious examination and moral reflection” (p. 3).

The Need for a Relationship of Ethical-Political Responsibility

I have argued in this chapter that global/national poverty and inequalities are social realities which have been structured by neo-liberalism’s ideology of rational progress and top-down practice of economic globalization since the 1960s. The asymmetrical power relation between the privileged states/actors and the disadvantaged states/actors is shaped through a strategy of unrestrained victimization. By this, I mean to emphasize that poverty and inequality are not in any way “neutral” or “unavoidable” phenomena, nor should the oppressed states/actors be blamed for their failures. What is extremely important is that we recognize the political, economic chains of cause and effect. Equally important is that we recognize how the ethic of human solidarity cannot be supported by freedom of commerce, but freedom of humanization (Freire, 1998a).

For Freire (1998a), neo-liberalism’s intrinsic insensitivity to the ethical dimension of human relations forgets how we are beings with others in and with this world. For Levinas (1998, 2001) and Biesta (2007a), though, Others are integral constituents of the self, and therefore the self’s first responsibility is never to and for the self, but to and for Others. In the

previous section, I extended liberal humanism's "norm of humanness" (Beista, 2009a, p. 358) to refer to "what it means to be a human society;" likewise, I wish to extend Levinas' (1998a, 2001) understanding of the self to the individual nation state: the important task of each national government is then to discover Others in itself and always to understand itself as being in an ethical relation to Other nations.

No individual nation/actor should claim their respect for national/human pluralism and differences unless they understand what actually constitutes itself/himself/herself. In other words, the individual nation/self should always be already subject to a relationship of ethical-political responsibility¹³ to and for Other nations/people. It is only when we understand the individual nation/self in this way that we can break away from the national egoism and the egoistic self, thereby moving beyond national/self interest to attend to Other nations'/people's freedom and right to *be*, and to be responsible for their absolute otherness. It is also because of this crucial understanding that I believe our fight against global/national poverty and inequalities should not presuppose moral sympathy, pity or beneficence but ethical-political responsibility. Only then can other nations/people be assisted with knowledge, (critical) awareness, and (democratic) skills and thus enabled to see how their (national/personal) impoverishment is not their own fault (such as by making irrational decisions or choices, or lacking responsibility), but is shaped by neo-liberal oppressive structures, ideologies, and practices. This form of assistance is in sharp contrast to neo-liberalism's paternalistic assistencialization, for it is generous for the sake of social egalitarianism itself, not because of the economic profits it is able to gain.

¹³ It is crucial to point out that for Levinas (1998a, 2001), the self's responsible relation with Others is fundamentally ethical, devoid of the political element. Yet, as a Freirean, I conceive the political is necessarily a complement to the ethical. My statement of "a relationship of ethical-political responsibility" should not therefore be read as erasing points of difference between Levinasian and Freirean theoretical traditions.

Chapter Five:

ENTREPRENEURIAL INDIVIDUALISM AND CONSUMERIST IMPERIALISM

After discussing the global context of neo-liberalism's effect on social reality in Chapter Four, this chapter focuses on the national context, especially from the 1990s onwards. By unquestioningly duplicating the global/regional authorities' policy scripts, the DPP Government, the administrative successor of the KMT Government, despite its pre-election commitment of improving social conditions, has in fact further thrust Taiwanese society towards democratic capitalism (capitalist democracy) with decentralized economic systems, and a distribution of resources based on rational policy/guidelines rather than human need. The antagonism between political parties, coupled with the traditional attitude of "official disrespect" (Pogge, 2008, p. 62) helps reproduce cynical democracy and the "colonizer's predatory presence" (Freire, 2004, p. xxii), thereby creating further economic pressure for citizens, especially the disadvantaged.

What is regrettably absent in the political discourse is not only a spirit of ethical, rigorous co-governance, but also the understanding of the self as a relationship of ethical-political responsibility to and for Others. Hence, the neo-liberal state's belief in excessive individual sovereignty results in the "Asian versions of world-cultural myths of individual autonomy, choice and efficacy" (Boli, 2005, pp. 399-400), which in turn validate the educational practices of consumerism and managerialism that misconstrue the teaching profession as a peculiar mix of "managerial-parenthood" (Li, 2002), and subvert the democratization of both ethical-political responsabilization for, and professionalism in education (Biesta, 2004a; Chen, 2009; Cho & Ho, 2007; Gilbert, 2005; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Wu, 2004; Zhou, 2003; Zeldin, 2010).

Under the neo-liberal strategy of “divide and rule” (Freire, 1996, p. 122), alienation between diverse social groups is intensified, and this social division undermines ethical stability and allows the perpetuation of neo-liberalism’s ideological manipulation, political domination, and cultural imposition: in sum, dehumanizing oppression. For this precise reason, the end of this chapter will advocate, with Freire (1996, 1997b, 1998a) and Biesta (2006a), for an active, civil society mobilized by solidarity, infinite utopian hope and a robust participatory democracy.

Taiwan’s Social Transformation and Economic Structural Change

In order to provide an informed analysis of why Taiwanese society placed great expectations on the DPP Government when it came into power at the beginning of the 21st century, a brief introduction to the state in terms of its political, economic and social conditions during the early KMT administration is necessary. In 1949, the KMT Government retreated from mainland China to Taiwan and subjected the society to its totalitarian rules, including the *Martial Law* and the *Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion* (Wang, 2002), under the banner of “public security” and “social solidarity”. According to Wang (2002), this period is known as the White Terror and lasted for almost four decades. Characterized by the politics of conformity and domestication, the White Terror period was a tyrannical time when military officers were deployed in every large enterprise and all educational institutions to forestall and punish civic disobedience and social discontent. Citizens’ rights and freedom were severely infringed, rendering the existence of the National Constitution as nothing more than black ink on paper.

In 1987, Martial Law and the Temporary Provision Law were lifted, and two years later, the National Constitution was also amended to restore people’s freedom of speech, the freedom of the media, and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. The 1990s were thus

claimed by Chen (2009), Lee (2010), Pan and Yu (1999), MOE (2007) and Wu (2004) as a critical time in Taiwanese history. This can be seen, for example, from the emergence of the first opposition, the DPP, in 1986 and the successive establishment of civil groups¹⁴ from 1989 onwards, as well as the very popular introduction of presidential elections in 1996. In addition to significant social transformation, the state's mainstream economy has also shifted from the traditional labour-intensive sector, such as agriculture and manufacturing, to high-tech industries based on niche marketing services and the production of value-added commodities.

The state's successful transformation of the industrial structure is reflected in the rapid growth of local venture capitalists, the remarkable expansion of a total number of 125 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the short period of 1994 to 1999, and Taiwan's position as the world's third largest IT products exporter (APEC, 2000). As stated in the previous chapter, world-wide trade is the economic backbone of the state, which is evident in the following comparative figures of national dependence on foreign trade in 1999: 20% for the United States, 40% for the United Kingdom, 50% for Germany, and 80% for Taiwan (Chang, 2005). What this demonstrates is that the state cannot possibly be internationally competitive if citizens lack entrepreneurship in exploiting international/national capitalist markets. Thus, since the late 1990s, local industries have successively moved their production line offshore to countries like China, Malaysia and Thailand as a means of reducing business costs. Consequently, a large number of Taiwanese workers who have not

¹⁴ The 1989 establishment of the Humanistic Education Foundation (人本教育基金會), which advocates student-centred education and zero corporal punishment; the 1989 formation of the Homemakers' Union and Foundation (主婦聯盟), which concerns parental rights in education; and the 1998 establishment of the Teachers' Rights Association (教師人權促進會), which aims to protect the rights of teachers, and to promote school democracy and quality education.

yet been able to upgrade their basic, traditional skills to creative and innovative abilities are sacrificed without having a chance to have their voices heard (Xie, 2007).

The DPP Government's Neo-Liberal Policy Thrust

Given the large number of people who were disadvantaged and marginalised under the KMT Government's brand of capitalism, Taiwanese society had high hopes for a radical change when the DPP came into power in 2000. However, the expectation of robust, ample social welfare protection, which was advocated by the DPP, never materialized (Ku, 2004).

According to Ku (2004), the DPP administration has in fact not only maintained the KMT Government's neo-liberal position, but taken it one step further to encourage incoming market capitalism, competitive entrepreneurship and flexible management. Morrison (2003) notes that in order to acquire an immediate, profitable global market conduit, the DPP Government removed a wide variety of tariff/non-tariff barriers in exchange for WTO membership. Shortly after the authorization of this membership, a *Proactive Liberalization With Effective Management* policy was implemented by the DPP administration in August 2001 to encourage Taiwan-China direct capital investment and economic trade (Office of the President, 2005). Regarding the purposes of this policy reform, the former DPP president, Chen Shui-bian, states:

External trade is important for Taiwan's survival...Taiwanese businesspeople have good opportunities to invest in China and we take this seriously...cross-strait economic policy is clear: to richly cultivate Taiwan while reaching out to the world [as] the China market is one link in the global market...we must allow Taiwan, our motherland, to continue to grow, progress and prosper [through] economic investment (Office of the President, 2005, pp. 4-5).

Despite the dissent of the KMT opponents who argued that this “liberating move” would hollow out the core industries, exacerbate the unemployment rate and worsen the living standard of the Taiwanese majority, the former DPP vice president Lu Xio-lien expressed her faith in the neo-liberal approach to governance and policy:

some political leaders [KMT] believe that what they need is a “big government” with overwhelming power over the economy and society.... Hard power, with its heartless and mechanical nature, ignores humane values and misleads nations toward over-centralization of state power... It is aggressive and destructive! Soft power, in contrast, makes use of mercy and wisdom to fight against corruption, poverty and injustice. It is constructive and generous....Experience shows that implementing (neo)liberal economic policies can indeed stimulate growth and improve human well-being (Office of the President, 2002, pp. 2-3).

My key points here are twofold, informed respectively by the insights of Freire (1997b, 2004) and Mouffe (2005). Firstly, the DPP Government’s actions as an elected official party fundamentally betray its discourse before the election. Believing that its ends can justify its means, a false promise was made unproblematically to the public, thereby giving citizens a false conception that change can be made easily as long as they vote for it. For Freire (2004), such an inconsistent discourse not only manifests an unethical manner of behaving, but also helps reproduce the “colonizer’s predatory presence” (p. xxii). From his perspective, being consistent is not a favour we bestow on others, but rather, it is “the final stage of our being [as a] whole” (p. 21). Freire (1997b) is adamant that the task of a winning political party is not to antagonize its opponents, but to share the governing responsibility with them in an ethically rigorous manner. The remarks of the former DPP vice president, on the contrary, are full of disrespectful cynicism, rather than constructive, mature criticism. Applying

Mouffe's (2005) theory of "agonism" (p. 16), this is due to the DPP Government's incapability of transforming antagonism into agonism, so that its opponents are viewed as enemies rather than legitimate adversaries. As a result, the possibilities for democratic conflict and critical dialogue are subverted and reduced to a series of meaningless quarrels.

With respect to the neo-liberal economic policies referred to by the former vice president, the next section will demonstrate how the DPP Government's policy decisions are unitarily guided by global/regional authorities' analysis and implications.

Neo-Liberal Global/Regional Authorities' Policy Scripts

In a neo-liberal world polity, world development and national development operate in a somewhat conflicting, but mutually fortifying dialectic (Boli, 2005). Global/regional authorities' policy scripts are delivered as universal laws, which in turn direct national policy decisions and affect social reality within and across countries. This increasingly intensifying relationship between the world and nations, according to Boli (2005), is also applicable to the state and its citizens, as the "heavy doses of individualism" (p. 390) disseminated by the hegemonic government turn the individual citizen into "a sacralised object of loyalty" (p. 390). The Taiwanese are thus global citizens, who are nevertheless patriotic entrepreneurs and consumers acting in conformity with neo-liberal norms. Three years after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, global/regional authorities, including the OECD and APEC, asserted that it was vital for the DPP administration to implement structural adjustment policies to further decentralize the state's economy to allow greater accumulation of profit.

In this section, I will firstly compare the OECD's document *Knowledge-Based Industry in Asia* (2000) and APEC's document *Building the Future of APEC Economies: "Move Forward on the New Economy and Entrepreneurship"* (2000) with the Taiwanese Council on

Economic Planning and Development's (CEPD) *Plan to Develop a Knowledge-Based Economy in Taiwan* (2000), to demonstrate how the state's policies are de facto duplicates of those of the OECD (2000) and APEC (2000). Then the focus of critical analysis will move on to the ethical and political consequences these policies have for Taiwanese society.

The objective of the OECD's *Knowledge-Based Industry in Asia* (2000) is to provide policy suggestions by analyzing and comparing the advantages and disadvantages of six nations (Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand and China) pertaining to their development of a knowledge-based society. The report claims that Asian countries, even though they are more economically liberalized than they were in the past, still manifest a top-down approach in some socio-economic spheres (e.g. business and education) which in turn raises concerns about excessive government intervention. Furthermore, Asians' cultural differences in (authoritarian) heteronomous determination, in which initiatives are to be taken on the basis of family and community, rather than the individual, are perceived as being too rigid and inflexible, and therefore impeding the construction of knowledge-intensive industries. For the OECD (2000), it is necessary for Asian countries to counter their economic monism, or "state-led growth strategy" (p. 65), through the creation of "a dynamic market system where firms [and educational institutions] can adjust spontaneously to changes in technology and market demands" (p. 65). Based on the OECD's (2000) market-led growth scheme, six strategies were suggested to the DPP Government; these are presented in Table 5.1, where they are compared with those advanced by APEC (2000) and CEPD (2000).

In APEC's *Building the Future of APEC Economies: "Move Forward on the New Economy and Entrepreneurship"* (2000), a neo-liberal culture of "lifelong learning entrepreneurship" is consistently promoted. An entrepreneurship that stresses a spirit of lifelong learning is perceived to be universal, a norm that is an underlying feature of a knowledge-based

economy, and conducive to the national enhancement of overall economic efficiency and productivity gains. APEC (2000) nevertheless warns its member states that a lifelong learning model for “entrepreneurship cannot thrive when markets are not competitive” (p. 7). The government’s positive role in creating an efficient market mechanism, APEC (2000) continues, is therefore paramount for individual entrepreneurs’ search of “unexploited profit opportunities” (p. 7).

To improve market conditions, it is suggested that member states overhaul their education system and utilize decentralized education as a means of encouraging competition, quality enhancement, and effective management as well as personal, autonomous initiatives (APEC, 2000). According to Tully (2008), this promotion of personal initiatives is not only applied to the individual citizen, but also to educational institutions, in that institutions in a neo-liberal discourse are recognized as “‘persons’ with the corresponding civil liberty of private autonomy” (p. 18). The implication of APEC’s (2000) analysis, in sum, points to a necessity for the DPP Government to restructure its education system to ensure that institutions are managerial, and capable of developing lifelong-learning entrepreneurs, who in order to achieve self-actualization will unremittingly invest in intangible assets, namely, knowledge, skills and competences.

Inspired by the “impressive profits” (p. 3) gained by the Western European countries’ sequential market structural reforms, the opening of CEPD’s *Plan to Develop a Knowledge-Based Economy in Taiwan* (2000) affirms that “enhancing our [Taiwan’s] international competitiveness and profitability” (p. 3) requires that national policies be designed in accordance with advanced Western culture. Thus, nine overarching strategies are formulated to transform the state into a “Green Silicon Island” – an egalitarian knowledge society with a sustainable economy. The comparison of the OECD, APEC and CEPD policy

documents listed in Table 5.1 shows considerable similarities. In fact, not only are Taiwan's CEPD (2000) policies unoriginal, but APEC's (2000) strategies are also, to a large extent, duplicates of the OECD's (2000) blueprint, minus the original context.

Table 5.1. A comparison of the economic strategies of OECD (2000), APEC (2000), and CEPD (2000)

OECD's (2000) Knowledge-Based Industry in Asia (p. 66)		APEC's (2000) Building the Future of APEC Economies: "Move Forward on the New Economy and Entrepreneurship" (pp. 5-9)	CEPD's (2000) Plan to Develop a Knowledge-Based Economy in Taiwan (pp. 16-17)
Strategy	★Speed up the restructuring process of traditional industries	◎Implement structural policies to create and strengthen markets, including competition and deregulation policies, trade and investment liberalization, education and basic research, industrial infrastructure, corporate laws, intellectual property rights, taxation, and consumer protection	◎Deepen competitive, market reform policies in both public and private sectors
1			
2	◇Enhance comparative advantage in creativeness and create locally-oriented products	★Promote E-commerce and technological management	★Improve conditions for the development of SMEs
3	▲Develop the links between ICT industries, domestic needs and education	▲Expand access to technologies and information and narrow the digital divide	★Promote the development of high-value-added service sectors
4	◎Foster a decentralized market environment and appropriate structural policies to encourage competition and entrepreneurship	●★Encourage entrepreneurship and the development of the SMEs	☆Promote investment in intangible assets and lifelong learning
5	☆Improve institutional efficiency and enhance fiscal incentives to intangible investment, such as R&D and	☆Promote a life-long learning society and flexible management in general	◎★Foster entrepreneurship and developing venture capital markets

	personal training		
6	★Enhance conditions for the SMEs and microeconomic infrastructure		★Support the development of knowledge-intensive industries by upgrading traditional industries
7			◇Accelerate the commercialization of new inventions and encouraging innovation
8			▲Promote ICT abilities and computer literacy, narrowing the digital divide
9			◎Review basic infrastructure, laws and regulations, labour conditions and the governance structure

Note. Given that strategies marked by the symbol ★ are more business- than education-related as they seek to readjust industry infrastructure to encourage the development of the SMEs and high-value-added service sectors for the advent of a knowledge-based economy, I shall instead identify the key to those symbols that have profound influence for the decentralization, marketization, managerialization, and lifelong learnification of education: ◎ Decentralize governance to encourage market/meritocratic competition and entrepreneurial individualism; ☆ improve efficiency in education and promote lifelong learning investment in intangible assets; ▲ improve access to, and citizens' abilities in technologies and information in order to produce sufficient workers for the needs of ICT industries; and ◇ encourage creativeness and innovation for the commercialization and commodification of education and education products.

Based on the comparison in Table 5.1, we may assert that the centre's commitment to the development of an equitable knowledge society is mere rhetoric, as almost all strategies are formulated on the basis of market logic. The concept of egalitarianism can at most be identified from "narrowing the digital divide" in the latter part of CEPD's (2000) strategy 8. While CEPD's strategies 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 are in response to the OECD's (2000) strategies of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 and APEC's (2000) strategies of 1 and 4, and are surely intended to

accelerate the transformation of the state's industrial structures, they nevertheless result in the problems of labour market exclusion and job insecurity. This can be seen, for example, from the soaring unemployment rate in Taiwan from 2.99% in 2000 to 5.85% in 2009 (Executive Yuan, 2009).

With regard to CEPD's (2000) labour condition review in strategy 9, such a review was only briefly mentioned in its *New Century Mid-Term Development Plan: 2005-2008* (CEPD, 2007a):

impacted by global economic development in information infrastructure, traditional manufactories and workers cannot compete with cheaper labourers provided by the international labour market. Rapid change in industry structure leads to greater income disparity between knowledge workers and low-skilled labourers.

Unemployment risks faced by low-skilled and older workers need to be addressed through lifelong learning and re-training strategies [as emphasized in the OCED's (2000) strategy 4, APEC's (2000) strategy 5, and CEPD's (2000) strategy 4] in order to improve their own skills and better their job opportunities (p. 115).

The centre's analysis clearly indicates that there is no policy alternative under the impact of the global economy. Believing occupational uncertainty or instability is an inevitable feature of the postmodern labour condition, at-risk citizens must learn how to be self-reliant, and active in seeking learning opportunities in order to upgrade themselves as "value-added" human capital. A neo-liberal government views citizens as free individuals who can purchase whatever commodities they desire, and their *lifelong* pursuit of private interests through economic investment is conducive to the development of world cultures of competitive entrepreneurialism and consumerism intended by the politically more powerful

and economically privileged for their own benefit (Boli, 2005). This consumerist and enterprising ethos in turn legitimizes the global/national government's furtherance of educational marketization, commodification and commercialization on one hand, and promotes competitive social behaviour at the expense of ethical stability and solidarity (collective actions) on the other (Singh, Kenway & Apple, 2005). In Taiwan, graduates need to "defeat" (this is the precise word that the media uses) an average of 103 competitors to have a job (Tsai, 2010). The media's sensational reports imbue Taiwanese citizens with an idea of *lifelong consumption* in as many domains as possible. The underlying assumption is that the individual citizen who fails to invest in enhancing personal competitiveness can only be "naturally eliminated" from the international/national labour market (Wong, 2001; Kao, 2005; "Job survey", 2009; Tsai, 2010). In respect to the Taiwanese citizen's relation to lifelong learning, further analysis is implemented from Chapter 6 to Chapter 9.

In this section, I have exemplified my argument in the previous chapter regarding how a homogenized world is being shaped by the state's proactive engagement with neo-liberalization or westernization. According to Spivak (1999), non-Western countries' sanctioned knowledge of *the*¹⁵ Western way in fact discriminates against their own value and belief system, thereby perpetuating the historical process of "worlding of the West as world" (Spivak, 1990, cited in Andreotti, 2006, p. 8). Without the DPP Government's careful consideration of the contextual specificity of Taiwan, the extent to which their neo-liberal policies "stimulate growth and improve human well-being" (Office of the President, 2002, p. 3) will be interrogated in the next section with the empirical data collected from local research reports.

¹⁵ The word *the* here refers to the neo-liberal way. Nevertheless, it should not be read as the *only* Western way, as neo-liberalism is just one of many possible ways of doing things.

National Poverty and Inequalities

Underpinned by belief in market competition and entrepreneurial individualism, the “merciful, generous” neo-liberal policies proclaimed by the former DPP vice president have indeed stimulated growth – growth, however, not in the increase of human well-being, but in poverty and inequality. This can be seen, for example, from the growing unemployment rate from under 2.5% in 1998 to 5.17% in 2002, a period in which 48.1% of the unemployment was due to lay-off (Chang, 2005); 49.23% of the total workforce are coerced to work overtime (+12 working hours a day) and about one-third of them receive no extra pay (“One in four”, 2011); there are 11.1 million underpaid workers (“Working poor”, 2011); a low minimum wage of NTD\$103 (NZD\$ 4.12) per hour and low minimum salary of NTD\$18,780 (NZD\$ 751.2) per month (Loa, 2011); a 6.5 times income disparity between the top 20% and bottom 20% of social groups in 2009 (Executive Yuan, 2009); the growing savings gap between the upper-middle class and the working class from under 2.5 times in 1999 to 7 times in 2009 (Executive Yuan, 2009); and the first-ever deficit saving (NTD\$ - 30,697; NZD\$ - 1,300) of working class citizens (Executive Yuan, 2009).

These empirical data demonstrate the serious negative socio-political consequences brought about by the profit ethic of the state, in which the minority’s welfare is improved at the expense of the disadvantaged majority. Chan and Lin’s (2006) survey study is helpful here to attest how the state’s neo-liberal policies have restructured the lives of working class citizens with poverty. In their national survey, Chan and Lin (2006) discovered the earnings of the high socio-economic cohort have gone up by 2.1%, whereas the earnings of those positioned at the bottom have dropped by 10.7%. While the economically disadvantaged, either unemployed or paid an exploitative salary, are facing serious social and financial risks, especially those who have school-age children, the DPP administration further replaces the

specific welfare subsidy with a general budget as a means of encouraging local governments to distribute the money more “wisely”. A survey study by Chan and Lin (2006) found that an approach of *pay as you see fit* results in citizens in different regions receiving very different subsidy amounts, whereby some feel belittled by the sum they receive. Thus, the way in which the DPP Government deals with national poverty, unemployment, and inequalities leads to Chan and Lin’s (2006) damning conclusion that there is: “no sign that the government is determined to resolve [these] problems” (p. 1).

Neo-Liberal Oppression: Official Disrespect

The disturbing impact of neo-liberal policies on Taiwanese workers’ socio-economic conditions could in theory be addressed through labour unions, as such agencies are endorsed by the National Constitution to protect workers’ rights and well-being.

Nevertheless, Pogge (2008) argues that in practice laws are, more often than not, subverted by the neo-liberals’ “official disrespect” (p. 62), meaning that the centre reduces these laws to something existing in name only rather than enforced, so that those supposedly protected by the laws are unlikely to have much legal redress for their grievances. In Taiwan, this problem of official disrespect created by the early KMT Government is manifested in its attitude to the Constitution as merely symbolic. Democracy is then preserved and practised symbolically by DPP officials, who tactfully manage the population through an individualistic, “patron-client” consultation approach in order to prevent the formation of social collectivity (Wang, 2001). According to Wang’s (2001) research findings, labour unions in Taiwan tend to “become peripheral organizations within the party-state” (p. 350). If workers’ working conditions and income become untenable, “their only option was to resign and seek other employment” (p. 350). Nevertheless, it is conceivable that workers within a globalized, competitive labour market would not resign, but stay in the same company with continual dehumanizing treatment for at least two possible reasons: first,

insufficient income is better than no income at all; and second, they do not have entrepreneurial capital or skills.

In 2011, the centre further rejected the workers' request for a slightly higher minimum monthly salary of NTD\$23,459 (NZD\$938.36) (Loa, 2011). The centre claims that a raise as such will increase extra annual spending of NTD\$ 34.8 billion, and this financial burden will "hurt the competitiveness of Taiwanese businesses" (Loa, 2011). The official response is concerning in that it suggests a significant moral-based human relationship can be and, indeed, ought to be rationally replaced by a neutral, mechanistic calculation on fiscal return so as to judge whether a political action will benefit its economic backbone, that is, the corporate entities. From Marshall's (1995) perspective, this approach in which the social is theorized through an economic, rather than ethical lens demonstrates how for neo-liberalism social justice is nothing more than "an empty and vacuous term" (p. 374). Even "if there is anything could be called 'social justice'", he continues to argue, it would be "the outcome of economic activity" (p. 374).

In my view, the reason that neo-liberal officials are able to wilfully oppress the have-nots through their economic rationalism and disrespect for the law is largely due to neo-liberalism's lack of understanding of what actually constitutes the self. When Others are absent or ignored, the self sees no reason to evaluate and judge on the basis of Others' specific contexts. This is why I have argued earlier regarding the importance of "finding" Others in the self and always understanding the self as a relationship of ethical-political responsibility to and for Others. The neo-liberal market individual is devoid of Others and therefore incapable of vigilant co-supervision of the central government's institutional processes, and enforcing the law whenever necessary to honour and protect communal interests and justice (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Pogge, 2008). Even though this Western belief

in individualism clearly lacks commitment to social solidarity and democracy, such a belief has, however, been gradually internalized by Taiwanese citizens, and this, in the words of Boli (2005), “weakens the[ir idea of] family and produces Asian versions of the world-cultural myths of individual autonomy, choice and efficacy” (pp. 399-400). Following such world-cultural myths are the practices of educational consumerism and managerialism, which will be investigated in depth and critically analyzed in Chapters 6 and 7. The task of the next section is to explore how a culture of educational consumerism is shaped by the situationality and hence rationality of government officials. The discussion will also focus on how such a culture de-democratizes education and de-responsibilizes the stakeholders involved.

Educational Accountability in Consumerist Managerialism

As I have explicated earlier, the 1990s was a critical epoch for Taiwan not only in terms of its vibrant civil society and successful industrial transformation, but also in its succession of controversial educational reforms. These reforms were initially formulated by CER officials, most of whom obtained their degree from a Western country, the United States in particular. In the eyes of the Taiwanese elites, Western ways of being are unquestionably superior:

The economic and political achievements of our past can be credited to interaction with advanced world civilizations, and so we must regard educational promotion with the same mindset...aiming to achieve the standards of advanced world countries and continue to demand self-enhancement to one day be among them (MOE, 2006a, p. 3).

Influenced by their socialization during overseas study, it is thus questionable whether or not these Western-educated elites are able to identify the state’s educational problems

authentically through the eyes of Others, namely, those who have been historically marginalized. In fact, in *From Humanism to Neo-Liberalism: A Response to the Taiwanese Educational Reforms*, He (2009) has negated such a possibility in that he discovers that some Western educational ideas and practices are directly transplanted by CER members from international journals to the Taiwanese context.

Based on their belief that a welfare polity and its universal, social services are insufficient, inequitable and unproductive, CER members advocate for a shift from educational welfarism to managerial post-welfarism to encourage citizens' personal autonomy, responsibility and independence (CER, 1996). Society's welfare dependency "disease" is described by CER (1996) as a "passive social phenomenon that urgently needs to be ameliorated" (p. 2). Hence, not only is funding for teachers' pensions now collected from their own monthly salary (MOE, 2010), but educational institutions' major funding source has also shifted from the public to the private sector to bring "greater" overall equality. Rather than excessive government support heavily subsidizing education, CER's (1996) *Final Report on Education Reform* states that "a market economy and its functional rules [will better] enable individuals to pursue their distinct purposes" (p. 2); moreover, CER states that a non-standardized tuition fee and market competition will spur institutions to compete in providing a better quality education. The centre's assumption implies that education is a "private, subjective" service provision that cannot be changed to suit any collective viewpoint. Thus, the Educational Fundamental Act was enacted three years after the *Final Report on Education Reform* to impose a culture of educational consumerism, evident in Article 8: "students' learning rights and parental choice in education must be respected and protected" (Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China, 2011).

According to Biesta (2004a), while such a culture is capable of avoiding the conventional provider-capture problem, it also has the capacity to subvert educational professionalism and responsibility in favour of managerial accountability. Managerial accountability is defined by Moller (2009) as a means of securing consumers' trust, in that schools and teachers are to be held accountable for a student-centred learning environment and improvements in student learning outcomes. By instilling a provider-consumer focus on educational provision, parents and students may gain a feeling of power that is difficult to resist (Biesta, 2004a), especially as the Taiwanese teaching profession is misconstrued as a peculiar mix of "managerial-parenting", so the professional role of teachers is reduced to that of mere academic gatekeeper and care provider (Li, 2002). As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult for consumers to subsume their personal, private interests under a broader educational vision underpinned by teachers' professionalism (Biesta, 2004a). A tension between the two poles of stakeholders is thus inaugurated.

While not opposed to the nurturing dimension of teaching, Freire (1998b) reminds us never to juxtapose education with either technical managerialism or coddling parenthood. This is because being a teacher implies his/her ethical-political responsibility to assume greater demands of the profession in order to infuse meaning into education. Since 2002, the National Teachers' Association (NTA) have voiced their appeal for their right to unionize and strike, so as to publicize their thoughts on educational issues emerging from successive, controversial and sometimes contradictory reform policies (Li, 2002). With regard to NTA's main concerns, Hwang's (2003) and Yang (2001)'s analysis which seeks to explain why Taiwanese society was disrupted by this period (1999-early 2000s) of controversial education reform is helpful here, and synthesized as follow: (1) lack of originality in policy-making processes; (2) the neglect of contextual specificity; (3) the constant replacement of Ministers of Education (seven replaced during a ten-year period from

1993-2003); (4) the absence of small-scale pilot or trial studies on proposed reforms; (5) insufficient in-service teacher training programmes; (6) increasing income disparity and an inadequate welfare programme; (7) ideological conflicts between parents, teachers and the central government. CER (1996), for example, has blamed educational reform problems not on structural issues, but individual teachers: “teachers are the key people who produce either successful or unsuccessful reform results” (p. 10).

Given the above points, we may assert that within an educational discourse as such, teachers’ right to initiate strikes is extremely important and indispensable for educational democracy and responsibility (Biesta, 2004a; Freire, 1998b). Based on their professional judgment, teachers’ strikes reflect their courage and capacity to fight for freedom. They are the manifestations of a living, participatory democracy as they give students “concrete testimony of the substantive meaning of struggle and other lessons in democracy” (Freire, 1998b, p. 5). For Biesta (2010b), teachers’ practice of living democracy contributes to the more desirable aspect of socialization – one dimension of the composite education – in which students become “part of particular social, cultural and political orders” (p. 20), that is, participatory democratic agents who recognize the broader and deeper meaning of citizenship, and whose freedom is always limited for ethical reasons and premised on their social, rather than market right.

Unfortunately, the National Parents’ Association (NPA) fails to see the importance of such activities, through which teachers redress unjust teaching and learning conditions on the basis of their unconditional love for students. Believing teachers’ strikes will not only set up a *negative* role model for their children, but also contravene their children’s right to receive managerial-parenting services, NPA plays the customer trump card in demanding that the central government provide further “consumer protection” (Li, 2002). The centre is urged to

establish a teacher performance evaluation and exit mechanism to reassure parents about education quality in relation to their children's educational performances. Such a mechanism was implemented in 2006, through the Ministry of Education's policy of *Preserving the Superior and Weeding out the Inferior* (2006g). NPA also demands the parental right to participate in school-based councils regarding issues of curriculum development/selection, as well as teacher employment and dismissal (Li, 2002).

All these tussles for power and control are unfortunate. What is overlooked by parents is that even if they have a voice in education, their participation is limited to the kind of services and type of teachers they want for their children (Biesta, 2004a). Parents' more important involvement in broader public discussion about what this culture of consumerist managerialism is supposed to achieve for education, or what kind of education in general would be desirable, remains absent. Without attending to the necessary relationship between the educators and the educated, as well as to the more difficult, political questions about what students are learning, and why they are learning it, this logic of "consumer protectionism" wrongly suggests that consumer satisfaction alone can lead to an improved Taiwanese education, and is therefore argued by various scholars (Biesta, 2004a; Chen, 2009; Cho & Ho, 2007; Gilbert, 2005; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Wu, 2002; Wu, 2004; Zhou, 2003; Zeldin, 2010) to be essentially a pseudo educational practice of putting the cart before the horse.

Furthermore, within an educational discourse built on the ethics of consumer sovereignty, teachers' professional judgments can only be exercised autonomously on condition that they are not at odds with consumers' wishes, so as to secure the stability of institutional finance. This in turn reaffirms the problem of official disrespect in the state, in that Article 8 of the

Educational Fundamental Act clearly states: “the professional autonomy of teachers must be respected and protected” (Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China, 2011).

From Freire’s (1996) perspective, this intensified alienation between teachers and parents is the intended outcome of neo-liberalism’s strategy of “divide and rule” (p. 122) or, in the words of Gilbert (2005), a strategy of “separatism” (p. 108). Rather than seeing educational problems as dimensions of totality, a separatist approach emphasizes a focalized view of problems to preserve the status quo and forestall the possibility of dialogical actions as well as of developing the social consciousness of the community (Freire, 1996). This social division allows the “perpetuation of the oppressor state” (p. 125), wherein an unjust and necrophilic order is preserved and stability is “bought” individually by ceaseless engagement in economic activities, rather than experienced in concrete, ethical acts of solidarity. So long as people are divided, Freire (1996) says, “they will always be easy prey for manipulation and domination” (p. 126). In radical opposition, Freire (1996, 1997b) advocates a need for different oppressed groups to cease being antagonistic towards one another, and unite within their diversities. This union, however, is not to erase the inherent differences across the diverse groups, but provide them with dialogical opportunities to identify their coincident objectives and hence “fight against the main enemy” (Freire, 1997b, p. 85).

Social Solidarity, Participatory Democracy and Hope

I have argued here that the chief enemy for the majority in Taiwanese society is neo-liberalism. Thus, if the Taiwanese people are to bring about greater (ethical) stability and solidarity in society, it is a prerequisite to destabilize neo-liberalism’s oppressive social structures, commonsensical ideologies, and unjust cultural practices to allow an active, cohesive civil society where each, although different, unites in common hope(s) and works

hand-in-hand for the construction of a participatory, democratic utopia (Freire, 1996, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b). A pertinent example is useful here to illustrate how such a union, though difficult, is possible so long as we do not give up hope. According to *Asian Tribune* (“Communication scholars”, 2009), a group of Asian communication scholars, based on their common objective to “free” Asians from their peripheral reliance on the Western core, have united their differences in nationality and gender to initiate a series of *de-westernizing* projects, by employing Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Hinduism, to develop alternative communication paradigms that will better suit the peculiarities of Asian cultures. This in turn validates Freire’s (1996) belief about the *social* nature of empowerment: “salvation can be achieved only *with* others” (p. 127).

Indeed, hope plays a critical role in our acts of solidarity. Hope is linked to the *impossible*, to something which “cannot be foreseen as a possibility” (Biesta, 2006a, p. 281). Hence, every hope would necessarily involve uncertainty and risk. This risk for Freire (1996, 1997b, 1998a) is, however, a *fine* risk that we simply cannot avoid taking. Certainly, this is not to say that we cannot do otherwise than accept Freire’s (1996, 1997b, 1998a) value position. But the choice we have here is really more than a personal question, as the decision we make, either to be a conditioned abstract construct, or a concrete, historical presence, comes with certain ethical-political consequences which will inevitably impact on the life of other communal members. Thus, as a personal decision with multi-personal material effects, it is necessary that we think very carefully about whether or not we want the present capitalist dehumanizing oppression to be perpetuated in our future. With my decision made, I now invite the Taiwanese people to join this journey of humanization by daring to dream, to hope, and to learn from our mistakes and errors made during our search in uncertainty, while at the same time recognizing how our hopes and actions are never unlimited, but something that should always be ethically circumscribed by the rights and freedom of Others.

Chapter Six:

THE LIFELONG LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

As stated in the previous chapter, supporting APEC's (2000) thesis makes it necessary for the Taiwanese government to restructure its education system regarding the way it is governed, managed, taught, how students learn, and how their learning is measured in order to ensure the advent of an entrepreneurial, lifelong learning population. To extend this discussion, this chapter will start with an exploration of the relationship between the needs of new economies and those of the redefined "knowledge" in postmodernity. Attention will then be paid to the speech and deeds of global/regional/national authorities in order to suggest a possible reason for the absence of postmodern knowledge in the Taiwanese education system.

Given the value of knowledge in current commercial societies, it is important to explore Hayek's (1945) subjective theory of (economic) value, the foundation of a marketized, choice-based education. An educational market, underpinned by Hayek's theory, was introduced to Taiwan through the centre's 2005 implementation of *Performance-Based School Management* policy (MOE, 2007a). Under the guise of promoting greater equality and equity, neo-liberal governmentality regulates the norms of "responsibilization" and "performativity" to reconstitute the individual institution and actor into becoming a self-monitoring, self-motivating "knowledge capitalist" (Peters, 2003, p. 347), whose primary goal for lifelong learning is not to achieve the maximization of social well-being, but self-interest and gain.

Viewing learning as the acquisition of a few profitable pieces of knowledge or as a lifelong venture of individual competition, citizens are encouraged to *adapt* ceaselessly into, and

never to *change* the existing unjust reality. Neo-liberalism's mechanistic, decontextualized epistemology and ontology discount multiple ways of being and knowing, and thereby the objectives of education are reduced to nothing more than the imparting of official knowledge and skills and the (re)production of a self-interested population. Moreover, neo-liberalists following their belief in "competitive neutrality" forget how their initial demand for rational (educational) resource distribution helps shape an education that circulates along "the same lines as money" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 6). By exploring the Taiwanese state's educational philosophy that promotes citizens' "responsibility towards [the] self" (MOE, 2006a, p. 15) and its theoretical entailments and empirical effects, this chapter will demonstrate how a performance-or-economics-driven educational discourse manifests a deficit not only in autonomy, but also in democratic justice and educational intellectualism.

Knowledge Shift in the Education System

Based on the neo-liberal idea of a learning economy, the Post-Industrial Age is an area of new economies, referring to the information economy and the knowledge-based economy. The chief difference between these economies is distinguished by APEC (2000): the former perceives knowledge as the most important ingredient for production, whereas the latter addresses the importance of information technology (IT) to drive efficiency and economic growth. APEC (2000) makes clear that these two economies are complementary factors, as the creation and dissemination of knowledge can be facilitated by the accelerated use of internet networking. Thus, member states are urged to promote these two economies in tandem so as to create surplus economic value and enhance efficiency and productivity in corporate and educational processes and performance.

This global transition to a knowledge-based economy is accompanied with the shift of focus from the more tangible capital of land and labourers in the traditional sense, to the more

intangible assets of knowledge that are sometimes referred to as intellectual capital (Peters, 2003). With regard to a shift as such, it is necessarily beneficial to the capitalist mode of production and consumption that knowledge, unlike other resources, does not run out but expands and improves with use (Gilbert, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005). The knowledge being discussed here, however, is not the traditional, modern form of knowledge which serves as an end in itself; rather, it is a means to create and innovate. This fundamental difference in turn demonstrates that knowledge in postmodernity is no longer perceived as a static object, nor as something to be categorically acquired and accumulated for future use. Knowledge is now rethought as a verb¹⁶, a form of energy, or an integrated whole, encompassing all component parts that are themselves dynamic, fluid and always changing (Gilbert, 2005). As a means of responding to the needs of the knowledge-based economy, a specific form of postmodern knowledge is exclusively underscored in the OECD's (2000) document *Knowledge-Based Industry in Asia*.

In respect to the forms of knowledge, there are know-that, know-why, know-how and know-who. As the representatives of modern knowledge, the first two forms are explicit knowledge that is easy to codify and transmit. In contrast, the latter two are intrinsically embedded in the individual's competencies and personality, meaning that they are tacit in nature and more difficult to share between people. For the OECD (2000), know-how knowledge, although more difficult to codify, is extremely important as it is essential for the progressive economic development of individual nations, institutions and actors. Know-how knowledge refers to a range of skills and competencies that are, by nature, instrumental, practical and functional. Given such knowledge enables people to do things in a way that is

¹⁶ According to Gilbert (2005), knowledge as a *verb* refers to the shift of emphasis from knowledge (a product) to knowing, an ongoing process in which we learn to do things with knowledge, and to collaborate with others to create new knowledge.

more creative, efficient and effective, industries around the world have already been actively engaged with this knowledge shift to improve corporate practices and performance. While corporate entities are sensitively responsive to the wider global changes in the economic structure, though, these changes appear to have little or no effect on almost all education systems (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Gilbert, 2005).

In Gilbert's (2005) view, this situation in which education systems remain largely unchanged is due to institutions across the globe being still very much immersed in the modern mode of knowledge, learning and measurement: language and mathematics are assumed to be the most important subjects, and therefore students' test results in these particular subjects remain the determinant of their personal abilities and intelligence. The consequence of an education that emphasizes the learning of know-that knowledge is the (re)generation of a population that perpetually consumes and reproduces the existing knowledge. Gilbert's (2005) account is very pertinent to the Taiwanese educational context, where knowledge and measurement continue to serve as ends in themselves. According to the Taiwanese College Entrance Examination Centre (CEEC) (2011), know-how knowledge, even though extremely important, is difficult to assess numerically. CEEC's (2011) comment implies that even if the contemporary National English Curriculum Guidelines address know-how, the assessment of student learning would still persist in focusing on the "correct" answer and measureable know-that knowledge. This is exactly where an inconsistency emerges between the state's "actual" practice (as opposed to its "literal" policy content) and the policy script of the OECD (2000).

On the other hand, the primacy of language and mathematics is reflected in their use for class placement at the beginning of the semester (Cho & Ho, 2007), as well as in their twice or even fourfold credit point value compared to other subjects (MOE, 2011a). Interestingly,

the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (2006e), rather than reflecting on the implications of its imposed practices, suggests that the high status of traditional academic disciplines and the continuance of performance measurement reflect parents' and teachers' expectations. In fact, this obsession with educational measurement is not merely a national, but an international phenomenon which is fuelled by the OECD itself, through its international comparative studies (e.g. PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS) of students' performance in mathematics, science and reading literacy (Biesta, 2009b). This focus on educational measurement leads to my two main arguments. Firstly, such a unilateral focus on the international/national measurement of students' quantifiable performance, particularly in a few disciplinary domains, largely contradicts the OECD's (2000) and the Taiwanese government's "formal" advocacy of the necessary knowledge shift in the education system. This suggests that the state still acts in alignment with the OECD (2000), at least in the form of their "substantial" practices. Second, this uncritical practice of academic measurement serves to reinforce the focus on "teaching and learning to test" in the Taiwanese educational context, which, as I have argued in Chapter 1, is the major impediment to the advent of an intellectually flexible, knowledge-based education.

If "Taiwanese teenagers' school life" is to be no more "filled with [exam] pressure and misery" ("Taiwanese teenagers", 2009), if students are to be no longer "drifting aimlessly along the waves" ("Taiwanese teenagers", 2009), this epistemological shift from the learning of know-that to know-how knowledge is urgently necessary. To initiate such a shift, the educators and the educated should be encouraged to learn to *unlearn* the modern, monistic way of knowing, thinking, seeing and doing, so that "epistemological pluralism" (Andreotti, 2010, p. 6) is welcomed and proliferated in and throughout educational processes. Rather than viewing education as an acquisition of a fragmented body of knowledge or a fraction of skill, Biesta (2009b) suggests educators should view it as an opportunity to engage students

in cross-disciplinary, collaborative learning¹⁷, in which students learn to ask the question *how*, rather than the question *what*, about an object or phenomenon. It is, after all, by students' questioning about *how* an object or a phenomenon came into existence, *how* is it related to other objects or phenomena, and *how* to construct, with one another, an alternative relationship for an object or a phenomenon, that the know-how knowledge can truly become the basis of their learning, as well as the creative outcome of their collaborative construction (Freire, 1996, 1997b; Gilbert, 2005).

A Hayekian Economic System, Local Knowledge and a Decentralized, Marketized Education

Neo-liberalism perceives citizens as rational, autonomous, pre-social individual egoists, whose rights and freedom are fundamentally related to free market economics. Essentially, neo-liberalism adheres to classical mechanics (neoclassical economics), a particular branch of economic science, which mimics the model of Newtonian physics to decipher the mechanics of self-interest and utility (see Table 6.1) (Fullbrook, 2006). Mechanics is concerned with bodies' motions, and the forces causing this motion, in which the principles of physical systems are unproblematically applied to the social world. As Fullbrook (2006) demonstrates:

¹⁷ By applying Biesta's (2009b) thinking into the language of education, I propose that an English teacher should treat the learning of vocabulary, such as that of the human biological system, not as a mechanical act of spelling or memorizing, but as a dialogical action that affords infinite possibilities for students to creatively apply the vocabulary to social systems, through which they learn to raise critical questions and imagine a different social reality. For example, if a stomach is analogized by some students as a bank, we may challenge them about the relationship between a hungry stomach, empty savings account and a soaring crime rate. We may also challenge them about the consequences of the greedy appetite/materialism as a possibility of posing questions about fairness and justice to (re)establish a better human relationality.

“bodies” translates “individuals” or “agents”, “motions” translates “exchange of goods”, “forces” translates “desires” or “preferences” which when summed become “supply and demand”, “mechanical equilibrium” becomes “market equilibrium”, this being when the difference between supply and demand is zero, and “physical systems” translates “market” (p. 2).

Table 6.1. The application of Newtonian physics to neo-liberalism’s mechanical economic theory

Newtonian physics	Neo-liberalism’s classical mechanics
Bodies	Individuals/agents
Motions	Exchange of goods
Forces	desire/preferences
Summed	Supply and demand
Mechanical equilibrium	Market equilibrium

In this deterministic model, individuals are conceived as non-related atoms, acting independently on the basis of perfect information, and equilibrium is achieved at “the harmonious reconciliation of the interests of self-interested individuals” (Olssen, 2010, p. 224). Nevertheless, Hayek (1945, p. 522) refutes the possibility of man’s perfect knowledge, given variables in the forms of *local knowledge*, that is, “knowledge of people, of local conditions, and of special circumstances.” According to Olssen (2010), it is this understanding that distinguishes the Hayekian economic system from that of the traditional neoclassical model. For Hayek, the economic system is open, unbounded and full of complex and contingent patterns generated by individuals’ constant adaptation to changes in particular circumstances of time and place. Consequently, equilibrium for Hayek is not

something that can be scientifically attained; instead, it can only be approximated when the plans of individuals are mutually compatible (Rizzo, 1990).

Underpinned by subjectivism, Hayek's theory of local knowledge has profound implications for a minimal state, for an autonomous, self-determined population, and for a decentralized, marketized education. Believing central planning is incapable of accounting for the dispersed bits of incomplete and sometimes contradictory knowledge possessed by separate individuals, Hayek (1945) insists that every economic problem ought to be solved by the *price system* and a pure logic of *choice*, whereas the decisions in economy should be de-centered, and left entirely to the "man on the spot" (p. 524). Hayek (1945) is firmly convinced that the individual can then "choose his/[her private] pursuits and consequently freely use his/[her] own knowledge and skill" (p. 528). Hayek (1945) conceives that welfare states and their ample provision of public-funded services neglect the fundamental faculty of choice that *all* individuals are born with and always aspire to exercise. It is this early neoclassical assumption of *homo economicus* that serves the later conception of an ego-serving self in neo-liberalism (Fullbrook, 2006). Dictated by a principle of supply and demand, the price mechanism is conceived as the best information disseminator, through which the individual's separate actions are being coordinated in the same way as his/her subjective values coordinate his/her partial plan (Hayek, 1945).

Because society for neo-liberalists is a mere aggregate of separated, self-interested individuals, the individual and society are, consequently, "unthinkable without market relations" (Hayek, 1945, p. 529). Such an individualistic understanding of society that ontologically "prioritize[s] the individual over the moral" (Olssen, 2010, p. 158) cannot therefore destabilize but reinforces possessive individualism, by which the individual is to be responsible largely, if not only, for his/her own actualization, solely by means of

perpetual choice-making. With regard to contemporary knowledge-based society, the individual citizen is “responsibilized” as a self-reliant “knowledge capitalist” (Peters, 2003, p. 347) whose prime venture is to invest unceasingly in an intangible form of assets. Education or knowledge in postmodernity, just as Lyotard (1984) predicted, has become a commodity that is sold and purchased according to its use-value in relation to the international/national labour market. Instead of being a public good that is freely available to everyone, education becomes a somewhat competitive and exclusive private good that is “available only to those who can pay for it, and used mainly to generate new wealth for the already wealthy” (Gilbert, 2005, p. 40).

Neo-Liberal Governmentality: Performativity and Responsibilization

Overlooking human beings’ socially-shaped and relational characters, the idea of individual sovereignty is unambiguously promoted by the central government through various educational policies (CER, 1996; MOE, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e, 2007a): individual empowerment, individual improvement, individual achievement, individual development, individual needs and interests, individual abilities, individuating institutions, individualized learning, self-directed learning, self-discipline, self-responsibility, self-management, self-determination and self-realization. The neo-liberal state’s strong narrative of individualism is argued by Boli (2005) to be a means of effecting citizens’ cognitive changes so as to discipline their minds and bodies. This understanding is also endorsed by Lyotard (1984):

the State resorts to the narrative of [individual] freedom every time it assumes direct control over the training of the “people,” under the name of the “nation” in order to point them down the path of progress...[with] the spread of new

domains of knowledge to the population, a process to be effected through agencies and professions within which those cadres would fulfill their functions (p. 32).

The means by which the state rationalizes a particular kind of governance and equates individual citizens' well-being, happiness or productiveness with specific forms of behaviour is called "governmentality" (Schuerich, 1994). Under the guise of its political and economic goals, neo-liberal governmentality has institutionalized two interdependent norms – *performativity* and *responsibilization* – for all education systems in postmodern, knowledge-based society to realize the alleged great human progression (Boli, 2005). The performativity demanded by a Taiwanese government concerned with the most efficient and effective educational processes has had widespread effects on education, which will be explained more fully in Chapter 7.

Regulated by governmental rationality, this normative mentality conditions the thoughts and actions of educational stakeholders, who then help proliferate social regularity by applying this seemingly commonsensical knowledge to their responsibilized areas (Scheurich, 1994). In other words, it is through governmentality that a particular social order and reality is "autonomously" restructured and shaped by the unconscious individual agents. This disciplinary process is what Rose (1990, 1993) terms "governing the soul" (cited in Graham, 2007, p. 202) or "govern[ing] without governing" (cited in Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004, p. 137), whereas for Scheurich (1994), this is more of an arbitrary process in that any ways of being that are not officially recognized are dogmatically negated.

As a headless "monster, without a conscious master" (Scheurich, 1994, p. 307), neo-liberal governmentality proclaims an unquestionable relationship between "effective school reform" and greater freedom, democracy, equality and quality in education (CER, 1996;

MOE, 2006a, 2007a). In respect to this claim, what is overlooked by the centre is how “effective school reform” or “school-based performance management” is a highly contestable field which is never simple or straightforward. In order to verify whether effective school reform can indeed bring greater freedom, democracy, equality and quality in education as the Taiwanese government asserts, it is necessary that we scrutinize the decentralized educational structure from the perspectives of its proponents and opponents, as well as considering the findings of empirical studies.

School-Based Management: Democracy or Democratic Deficit?

According to UNESCO (1999), the reason for an effective school reform is to ensure that every student is provided with a quality education. In agreement, APEC (MOE, 2004) articulates that the development of a quality education is largely dependent on “the degree of decentralization” (p. 3) and whether or not schools attend to “the relationship between education reform and a changing economy” (p. 1) and “adjust and improve their input and process to achieve the desired results [of] efficiency, effectiveness and equity” (pp. 2-3). A decentralized educational system that delegates authority and responsibility to personnel at the school level is deemed by UNESCO (1999) and APEC (MOE, 2004) to be representative of educational democracy. Sharing the same perspective, many scholars (Candoli, 1995; Cheng, 1996; Lindelow & Heynderickx, 1989; Lo & Gu, 2008) believe that the implementation of school-based management signals the centre’s trust of institutional autonomy, promotion of staff collaboration and protection of intellectualism in education. These scholars argue that decentralized governance allows greater flexibility, participation and shared commitment in the process of decision-making; decisions made at the school level will ensure resources are efficiently and effectively allocated to meet the priorities identified in the school’s needs. Further, empowered school staff are believed to become more motivated in exchanging ideas and more productive in their design of class material.

This in turn will afford teachers a sense of job satisfaction, benefit student learning, and fulfil parental expectations. The proponents of school-based management are convinced that such a trust-based, responsible, responsive, effective and autonomous educational environment will lead to enhanced education quality, and therefore taking this policy approach is essential.

While the decentralized proponents' main arguments are accepted by Peters and Marshall (1990), they do, however, question the authenticity of the participatory structures within neo-liberalism's alleged "democratic" decentralization. Such participatory structures, in the view of various scholars (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Rizvi, 1994; Singh, Kenway & Apple, 2005), are essentially illusional in that schools' decisions cannot be made autonomously, but within a broader framework of the government's policies and guidelines. As a result, this supposedly effective neo-liberal school reform intensifies school staff's administrative workload, bureaucratizes the principal-staff relationship, subverts opportunity for collaborative planning, and deprives teachers of time to reflect on their teaching practices (Kimber & Ehrich, 2010; Townsend, 1996). On the other hand, the focus on accountability appears to weaken rather than strengthen trust and responsibility in teaching and learning, thereby disempowering teachers and de-professionalizing education. In relation to the claim of an improved educational outcome by proponents of decentralization, various scholars' (Caldwell, 1997; DeGrauwe, 2004; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Watson, 2004) empirical research has demonstrated its unwarranted nature, for their findings show little or no positive impact has been made by a decentralized approach to education. Thus, Kimber and Ehrich (2010) conclude such a practice is a "democratic deficit" (p. 179), and Caldwell (1977) insists it is "not [to] be adopted or ought to be abandoned" (p. 1).

With its practice of globalizing education from “above”, the *Performance-Based School Management* (MOE, 2007a) policy is a de facto manifestation of “authoritarian liberalism” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 68). It is authoritarian to the extent that the possibility of public debates regarding the marketization of educational institutions is restricted by the centre in order to secure consensus. In *School-Based Management. Fundamentals of Educational Planning-62*, UNESCO (1999) points out that effective school reform in most Asian countries does not originate from “below” as in Eastern Europe and parts of the United States; it is rather imposed by the national government which seeks to enforce the strategy of “responsibilization” (Olssen, 2010, p. 174) to foster a decentralized market environment and lifelong learning entrepreneurship. Thus, I contend here that the true purpose of the state’s school-based performance management reform is concerned not so much with the perfection of social equity and democracy, but with the maximization of individuals’ utilitarian ethic and productivity.

The Lifelong Learning Economy, Knowledge Capitalism and Competitive Neutrality

Within a knowledge-based, learning economy, a world culture of lifelong learning entrepreneurship is disseminated by the OCED (2000) and APEC (2000). The belief that educational institutions and their respective members’ “learning span” and “ability to learn” (OECD, 2000, p. 29) will determine their future development and growth compels institutions in almost all countries to transform into “learning organizations.” Underpinned by personal autonomy and responsibility, members in learning organizations are expected to know how to learn effectively as well as how to always keep learning. Neo-liberalism’s idea of lifelong learning entrepreneurs reflects its demand for “everlasting human responsiveness” (Olssen, Codd & O’Neill, 2004), whereby individuals are encouraged to *adapt* ceaselessly into, and never to *change* the reality.

For Freire (2004), a discourse that invalidates the possibility of change is ideologically oppressive: it intends to immobilize human beings in order to maintain a world more or less than it currently is, so that those in power are able to sustain their privileged positions. Treating people as their own possession, neo-liberalists' discourse favours death over life and cannot therefore be democratically revolutionary, but fatalistically reactionary (Freire, 1996, 2004). For Levinas (2001), any philosophy that perceives or portrays the material reality as static should be understood as "Stalinism and fascism" (p. 231), as it negates our infinite responsibility to make the necessary alterations and adjustments for social justice. Antonio Machado's poem is useful here to illustrate how change is not merely possible, but something essential to, and made by human beings throughout their life journey: "Traveler, there is no road. The road is made as one walks" (cited in Freire, 1998b, p. xviii).

To explain why neo-liberalism rejects any alternative possibilities, it is necessary that we understand its grounding epistemology and how it accounts for a monistic, rather than diverse ways of knowing. Rooted in mechanistic objectivism and mechanistic behaviourism, human consciousness, including values, beliefs, ideas, conceptions and attitudes, is viewed by neo-liberalism as merely a reflection of the world (objective reality), whereas human actions are conceived as simply mechanical responses to material or environmental stimuli (Au, 2007; Roberts, 2000). In this worldview, any possibility of the world being transformed through conscious human activities is negated because human consciousness and the world are understood as being in a fixed relationship, rather than a dynamic relation that is always changing (Roberts, 2000). It is by coming to know the world in such a passive, mechanical way that we respond by adapting our cognition, and become self-directive, lifelong learners in order to fit into the postmodern condition where education is increasingly becoming a form of "knowledge capitalism" (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This conditional reality in which education or knowledge is being commodified for sale and purchase is, nevertheless, created

by neo-liberalism's dominating ideology that is committed to minimal state and maximum personal responsibility. So long as people do not critically challenge and go beyond this surface reality, their domesticated consciousness will fatalistically accept that it is their *duty*, rather than their *right* to receive education (Biesta, 2009b).

With regard to knowledge capitalism, the global educational context focuses on both knowledge development (production) and knowledge investment (acquisition), wherein the primary task of learning for organizational staff is not simply to consume, but to produce knowledge, whether in the tangible form of products, such as curricula and courses, or in the intangible form of capabilities and competencies. The operation of knowledge capitalism in the international context is, however, fundamentally different from the way it operates in Taiwan. This is because the idea of knowledge production is underemphasized in the state's Senior High School context: every Senior High School-Based Council is allowed to develop only one to two school-based course(s) that take(s) up two to four out of 33 credits per semester (MOE, 2011a). Thus, we may assert that major courses taught and learned at schools are still very much controlled and regulated by the centre, at least in the framework of the curriculum.

Unlike countries like New Zealand, Australia, England and America, which have vast numbers of international students and thus are more likely to engage with "product differentiation", secondary institutions in Taiwan tend to favour using a pre-packaged curriculum, as they mainly cater for local customers whose primary concern in education is how well they perform in examinations (Zhou, 2003). According to Zhou (2003), pre-designed syllabi usually have a better alignment between the course of study and national examinations, which is conducive to schools being accountable for how well students perform in these examinations. This implies that secondary institutions in Taiwan

persist in playing the passive role of “knowledge imparters”, given the process of production and commodification of knowledge still operates largely outside the regime of schools.

While acknowledging a textbook-based curriculum is indeed a cost-efficient means of teaching and learning, it nonetheless overlooks the dialectical relationship embedded in the “gnosiological cycle of knowledge” (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 7).

From the perspective of Freire and Shor (1987), it is neither desirable nor possible to separate the gnosiological cycle embedded in the act of knowing. The first moment of the cycle refers to the acquisition of existing knowledge, whereas the other moment refers to the production of new knowledge. These two moments are, by nature, dialectically related. Yet the current educational practice in Taiwan dichotomizes such a cycle, and thereby the act of knowing is reduced to a mere transference of existing knowledge. Textbook-based teaching and learning is, in fact, fuelled by the Ministry of Education’s *One Standard, Multiple Textbooks* policy¹⁸ (2007a). Such a policy requires secondary schools to select textbooks from the ones that pass the state’s ideological censorship, and allows the dominant textbook companies to (pre)determine what should and should not be taught and learned at the classroom level. A censored, textbook-based curriculum that is in favour of capitalist production and consumption encourages teachers and students not to think and not to question, but to adapt to the rigid content and reproduce official knowledge. Thus, such a practice ought to be better understood as anti-professionalization and anti-intellectualism. It is for this precise reason, Hoos (1972) argues, that students who achieve high academic

¹⁸ On the surface, this policy that abolishes the conventional use of the national textbook seems to promote diverse ways of knowing, yet different textbooks produced by the respective publishing companies can, at most, differ in their presentation of official knowledge under the standardized curricula framework regulated by the centre.

performance in a non-thinking, non-questioning milieu suggest “nothing but triumph of salesmanship” (p. 166).

Interestingly, the idea of knowledge investment, contrary to that of knowledge production, cannot be overemphasized in Taiwan. Rather than emphasizing public investment and collective responsibility in education, the centre stresses the importance of personal responsibility. According to CER (1996), this is because “the benefits of investing in education are accrued to the individual, not to the society” (p. 1). As a vital means of enhancing one’s productivity, education leads to increased personal income. Thus, CER (1996, p. 1) asserts that “it is the fairest for individuals to pay for their own education”, which will then “help avoid wastage in the educational system”. In a knowledge-based, learning economy context, knowing how to “bring economic influence into full play and maintain an advantageous position” (MOE, 2006b, p. 1) is not just an important agenda for the state, but also for the individual citizen. MOE (2006c) continues that since “there is no unreasonable obstacle and limitation that prohibit one freely participating in learning activities” (p. 7), citizens must bear personal learning responsibility. Lacking such responsibility, citizens will become ignorant individuals with insufficient ability to compete against “competitors inside and outside of the country” (MOE, 2006b, p. 6) and are likely to be left behind by society. The Ministry of Education (2006c) concludes that individuals must know how to “catch the [knowledge investment] trends for survival” (p. 7). Citizens are explicitly encouraged to capitalize on the abundant choices currently provided on the credential market to increase their own competitive capability. A few examples of such credentials are Techficiency Quotient Certification (TQC), Microsoft Certified Application Specialist (MCAS), Commercial Vocational Education Society Professional Skills Certification (CEPC) and the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). An interesting point that should be noted here is that the number of GEPT examinees, according to the Language

Training and Testing Center (LTTC) (2011), has ballooned to four million+ after GEPT became an internationally “portable” certificate (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2. A comparison of GEPT certificate levels with those of CEFR, IELTS, and TOEFL

GEPT	CEFR	IELTS	TOEFL iBT
Advanced	C1 Effective Operational Proficiency	6.5-7.0	110-120
High-Intermediate	B2 Vantage	5.0-6.0	87-109
Intermediate	B1 Threshold	3.5-4.5	57-86
Elementary	A2	3.0	---

Resource from: the Language Training and Testing Centre (LTTC) (2011).

http://www.lttc.ntu.edu.tw/E_LTTC/E_GEPT.htm

From a Freirean (1998a, 1998b) perspective on lifelong learning, our engagement with a permanent process of knowing is not because we need to increase our own competitive advantage to surpass others; rather, it is because we acknowledge our own incompleteness, our finite knowledge, and our responsibility to transcend ourselves and to humanize society. The centre’s approach, in which bodies of knowledge (qualifications and certifications) are divided into fragmented units for individuals to invest in privately, fails to recognize how the

provision of learning is a governmental responsibility, and how the goal of lifelong learning is essentially social, rather than egoistical.

Furthermore, such an approach ignores the dynamism in the act of knowing, the interrelatedness of various disciplines and different ways of understanding, and the necessary view of knowledge as something provisional, always evolving (Roberts, 2000). For Freire (1998b), the student who learns within the centre's form of education can only become a "learned ignoramus" (p. xvii), incapable of grasping a more holistic view of the world. Thus, rather than viewing learning as the acquisition of a few profitable bits of knowledge or as a lifelong venture of individuals, it is better that we understand it as a *public* investment in all-encompassing knowledge, so that each person is not only assured of an equal learning opportunity, but also a panoptic understanding.

Unfortunately, Freire's (1998a, 1998b, 2004) understanding of lifelong learning is severely undermined in a learning economy that deems education to be an undervalued form of knowledge capital purchased by self-interested entrepreneurs. The Taiwanese government, as I have shown in the previous section, explicitly prioritizes *competition* and individual achievement over cooperation and collective accomplishment. Approaching education from the perspective of offering more choices, rather than equity, is to encourage the development of private interests and the circulation of education along "the same lines as money" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 6). This confirms Lyotard's (1984) prediction that learning in the postmodern condition would no longer be intrinsically driven by the thirst for truth or the search for utopia, but extrinsically motivated in terms of greed for personal status, wealth and power. For consumers, the value of education lies in its financial return in the immediate future, thus the individual's rational decision is based on what is economically worthwhile for himself/herself without much consideration of the negative ethical-political

consequences that his/her private decisions might have on the lives of other members of society. Learning institutions, then, are concerned solely with how to create a positive public impression that will attract more pupils, increase funding and make a profit in a competitive educational market. Thereby principals become autonomous commercial managers, and teachers turn into experts in training students to pass examinations, to ensure the institution maintains a high ranking on the examination league table. While individual agents/institutions seek ways to maximize their competitive advantage, “those who refuse to accept the [neo-liberal] rules, out of weakness or crudeness, are [legitimately] excluded” (p. 28).

Lyotard (1984) had made it clear that the game of knowledge capitalism can never belong to the poor, but only to the wealthy. This is because the neo-liberal idea of competitive neutrality is itself unrealizable: the so-called “level [market] playing field” (Roberts, 1999a, p. 102) is never level in that competitive advantages have already accrued to leading institutions and affluent members of society at the very starting point. Others, therefore, are doomed to fail in the alleged “neutral competition”. For example, the Taiwanese senior high school students who are unable to “invest” in supplementary courses or after-school programmes are “encouraged” by their schools to become “self-directed” learners at home (“Supplementary courses”, 2001). This money-led distribution of educational resources is also reported by the *Epoch Times* (“Raising price of textbooks”, 2008), according to which many urban institutions and parents have implicitly agreed to purchase all the censored textbooks currently available on the market, so that students are able to acquire “complete exam knowledge” and have a better chance of succeeding in the National Joint University Entrance Examination System than those underprivileged in the rural areas.

According to the logic of the Ministry of Education (2006d), children from economically disadvantaged families would be assumed to be “lacking personal learning responsibility” (and so be nonautonomous and irrational) because they do not “demand” goods like the supplementary courses and the NZD\$200 cost of “complete exam knowledge” provided by the textbook/reference book companies (“Raising price of textbooks”, 2008). These particular children have no choice but to be left behind by society. Under the “dictatorship of the marketplace” (Freire, 1998a, p. 115), the equality of opportunity proclaimed by the centre would thus be better understood as the individual’s “equal chance to leave the less fortunate behind in the personal quest for [knowledge], influence and social position” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 219). To put it differently, neo-liberalism’s equal society is one where citizens are all equally entitled to “play by the [market] rules” and “respect the [market] outcome[s]” (MOE, 2006a, p. 15), regardless of how unequal they really are. I contend that the “responsible” education promoted by the Ministry of Education (2006a) as citizens’ “responsibility towards [the] self” (p. 15) really means responsibility towards the self’s autonomous learning investment, rather than responsibility to and for Others. An education that neglects the inherent inequitable practices and structures underpinning the idea of lifelong learning in a knowledge-based economy is intrinsically “irresponsible”.

Clearly, education in the neo-liberal discourse has very little commitment to social justice, but quite a lot to reproducing the dominant ideology and existing unjust social structure. In order to maintain or enhance its relative status in local systems of competition, the individual educational institution is highly likely to keep the “have-not” students away and admit more of the “haves” (Biesta, 2004a). After all, “needy” students are not only costly, but lower an institution’s scores on all those vital league tables (Apple, 2003). Apple (2003) terms this problematic situation as “school-mediated forms of class privilege” (p. 11), in which the primary concern of institutions is no longer what they can do for their students,

but what their students can do for them (Biesta, 2004a). For Freire (2004), treating students not in their own right, but as a means to maximize the glory of the institutions and/or the state, is fundamentally dehumanizing and a manifestation of educational/political authoritarianism.

Despite the Taiwanese government references to a humanist democratic discourse, such a discourse lacks a system of compatible and consistent practices for its actualization. Instead, the government offers a discourse about neutral competition and equal opportunity, and a practice that wholly favours the haves over the have-nots; it offers a discourse about the decentralization of power and the respect of autonomy, and a political practice that re-centralizes power through the manipulation of language. This inconsistency between discourse and practice distances democracy and allows those in power to maintain their “dictatorship of class” (Freire, 1998b, p. 14). In what way the power of the centre is allowed to be strengthened, rather than reduced in this reform promoting self-governance will be explained in the next chapter in relation to accountable managerialism, a new public management theory which is argued by Apple (2003) to be “a massive re-centralization” (p. 15).

Chapter Seven:

PERFORMANCE-BASED EDUCATION

In this chapter, Lyotard's (1984) logic of performativity will be investigated in relation to the state's educational practices of "accountable managerialism", "scientific technicality" and "standardized human capital development" to account for the centre's heightened, rather than diminished power resulting from Taiwan's economically efficient school reform. This reform is based on the state's concept of all the stakeholders in education as self-interested economists in a marketplace, motivated purely by competition for personal gain, and has the effect of distracting public attention from the collective concerns intrinsic to educational processes and outcomes.

Under neo-liberalism's monistic epistemology and ontology, the politics of homogeneity are to be secured by rational (political) conformity, through the de-pluralization and de-politicization (or privatization) of public space (Biesta, 2001). Moreover, neo-liberalism's belief in atomistic individualism, which ontologically misconceives the individual as a physical atom, enables each to be unproblematically studied through a mechanistic, objectivist approach to search for the truth of personal (educational) performance. As a result, the relational (social) character of education is neglected, whereas the problem of educational underperformance is not to be solved by resorting to contextual, sensible judgments, but purely on the basis of retrieved factual, quantitative data (Biesta, 2009b, 2010c; Freire, 1998a, 1998b, 2004; Lyotard, 1984).

Firmly rooted in belief in human homogeneity and scientific technicality, education in the neo-liberal discourse is proceeding under a false conception of equality as sameness, thereby reducing teaching and learning to a standardized developmental process of human capital:

students are to be grouped by their personal ability in order to increase efficiency in educational processes and ensure (temporal) certainty in educational outcomes (Gilbert, 2005, 2010). Overlooking the importance of students' interpretation and comprehension in the act of knowing (Biesta, 2004b; Freire & Shor, 1987; Freire, 1998b), the state can only perpetuate a monologue-based, banking education that (re)produces teachers' authoritarian authority and students' tendency to absorb rather than produce knowledge.

In order to provide an alternative framework for the state's education, this chapter will argue for teaching and learning to be rebuilt on a model of "different but equal" (Gilbert, 2005, 2010). This model emphasizes participatory practices of democratic dialogue, structural critique and critical reflection (Biesta, 2004b; Freire & Shor, 1987; Hyslop-Margison & Sear, 2006); the roles of sensitivity, affectivity, relationality, positionality and contextuality embedded in pedagogical intersubjective interactions (Freire, 1998a, 1998b, 2004; Lyotard, 1984); and the recognition of uncertainty and hope in and throughout educational processes and outcomes (Biesta, 2006a; Freire, 2004).

Performativity: Accountable Managerialism in Education

Beyond the rhetoric of raising educational standards or improving education quality, a new form of *accountable managerialism* has been imposed by the Taiwanese government to reshape the educational landscape. Managerialism is sometimes termed "performance management", "corporate managerialism" and/or "economic rationalism" (Peters, 1996), which utilizes the private sector's business-informed strategies to reorient educational institutions towards a competitive, accountable performance culture. Central to performance management is the rhetoric around *accountability* and *performativity*, in which the objectives are to improve productivity, performance, transparency of services, and efficiency and cost-effectiveness in educational processes. In this model, institutions are subject to a

range of intrinsically-interlocked economic theories (e.g. theories of public choice, agency, and cost-transaction economic and property rights) and impelled to be self-motivated enterprises, capable of producing “proof” in an efficient manner (Forrester, 2011; Peters, 1996).

The introduction of performance management de-professionalizes educational institutions, in which the purpose of education is frustrated by shifting foci and values. Institutions’ absorption in business discourse stresses management skills, certifying qualifications, quantifiable output, performance review, institutional image, cost-cutting, strategic planning, performance indicators and fierce competition, as if there is no divergence between the objectives of education and those of private corporate entities. This approach is supported by the Ministry of Education (2006a) in its provision of a “competitive fund” (p. 13). The neo-liberal state sees the *competition mechanism* as the greatest motivating force for institutions to compete for *excellent performance*, which, in turn, helps improve overall education quality. As a consequence, educational institutions are now expected to be entrepreneurially “self-supporting” (MOE, 2006d, p. 26). Within a school-as-enterprise context, the role of principals is no longer to be educational leaders, but business managers whose generic management skills are prioritized, regardless of their irrelevance to education. This prioritization, the Taiwanese Council on Education Reform (1996) says, is unavoidable in that “principals need to be held accountable for the success or failure of their own institutions” (p. 4).

Hence, every educational institution must learn to operate with a business-imperative mentality, engage with the necessary SWOT analysis (or school development plan) to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in their own venture, and identify both internal and external factors that are either favourable or

unfavourable to the actualization of their objectives. For example, the objectives of the Affiliated Senior High School of National Taiwan Normal University (2011) are to develop “excellent, efficient, elitist, etiquette [*sic*] and sympathetic education” (p. 1). Such institutional objectives are concerning to the extent that the language of “excellence” and “elites” connotes a strong sense of market/peer/meritocratic competition. The result of competitive meritocracy, Andersen and Hjort-Madsen (n.d.) remind us, is the inevitable exclusion of some social members. An education that seeks to enhance students’ etiquette and sympathy to address its structured injustice is further condemned by Freire (1996) as a form of “false generosity” (p. 26) – generous in providing a rather superficial approach to address the academic and socio-economic inequality (re)produced by elitist capitalism.

As business enterprises, educational institutions are encouraged to focus on marketing rather than the concerns that are intrinsic to teaching and learning. This confusion in educational priority can be demonstrated through Figures 7.1 and 7.2. In Figure 7.1, Guang-Wu Public High School has installed an LCD screen facing the street. Rather than using the screen to announce the latest educational forums and invite the community to take part, it is used merely as the school’s marketing tool to advertise how well its students perform in mock exams and gaining qualifications: the words in red running through the LCD screen are the name of students who study at Guang-Wu, and the numbers are their examination scores.

Figure 7.1. Guang-Wu Public High School’s marketing advertisement (Google image, 2011)



Figure 7.2 shows another high school promoting itself. According to Shi (2011), Jin-Wen Senior High School's excellent performance of a high student ratio gaining national and international certifying qualifications enabled the school to be labelled a "high quality school" by the Ministry of Education in 2011. One of its "elite class" students, in particular, has acquired 56 qualifications during his schooling time in Jin-Wen. As Figure 2 shows, the school principal gives a "thumbs up" to the "king of qualifications" (Shi, 2011) who has becomes the school's advertisement for quality education.

Figure 7.2. Media publicity for Jin-Wen High School's top performing student (Shi, 2011).



It is important to point out that student outputs of test results and certifying qualification acquired are crucial in the Taiwanese Senior High Education context as the chief evidence in evaluating teachers' performance ("Supplementary courses", 2001). A teacher's performance review is used to determine how much salary a teacher should be paid as a reward or punishment (CER, 1996). Performance pay is criticized by Sharon Burrow, the Australian Council of Trade Unions president, as an "insult to the teaching profession" because it "demoralize[s] teachers by pitting them against one another" (cited in Kimber & Ehrich, 2010, p. 188). Such an approach not only ignores the socio-economic factors affecting students' performance (Martin, 2007), but reinforces competitiveness and division among teachers. Gleeson and Husbands (2003) and Little (1990) demonstrate that this

tendency towards isolation and competitive individualism influences teachers' unwillingness to ask for help and share information with one another: "they [teachers' professional interactions] are really quite superficial and brief, falling far short of genuine collegial collaboration" (Little, 1990; cited in Sprague, 1992, p. 187).

In Taiwan, 80% of teachers perceive performance pay as counterproductive not only to professional communication and their capacity to work in a team, but also to overall education quality (Huang, 2004). Teachers are compelled to focus on tests, and submerge their students under tremendous examination pressure to maintain or improve their institution's ranking and secure their teaching position. As a result of depreciated teaching professionalism, 50% of teachers are considering whether or not to remain in the profession (Huang, 2004).

Schools cannot develop democratic citizens if they are themselves undemocratic, and lack the courage to fight against this unethical form of managerialism (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). School principals and teachers are public servants whose service is embedded in their commitment to democratic values; they must not be misconstrued as self-concerned businesspeople motivated purely by personal financial gain. If institutions and their members are unaware of, and do not resist these dishonest educational practices, we simultaneously forfeit the Chinese Way (basic moral principles and values) which Confucius deemed so necessary for a moral life. For Confucius, when moral agents face a superior authoritarian force being exercised in an immoral way, they must not be made to bow before it; instead, such immorality must be respectfully disobeyed (Chan, 2002). Confucius' philosophy shares a commonality with that of Levinas: the constitution of ethics lies in the self's responsibility not for the benefit of the autonomous self, but for the vulnerability of Others. Applying Confucius' and Levinas' ethics to the case of Taiwanese managerial

reform, it becomes clear from the stress put upon our students that institutional staff have an ethical-political duty to maintain an ethical position and defend their democratic post.

As I have shown, neo-liberalism's managerial accountability confuses the cause and effect in education and removes a form of collective, public good that is intrinsic to the educational process (Biesta, 2004a; Freire, 1998b; Roberts, 1998). Why, then, is this culture of accountable performance able to proceed without an outcry in Taiwan?

Theoretically speaking, accountability requires educational institutions to be held publicly accountable for their performance. Such a requirement seems acceptable because we tend to perceive "accountability" as "responsibility", thus arguing against accountability becomes a direct argument against responsible actions (Biesta, 2004a). The ambiguity embedded in a word like accountability, I believe, requires careful analysis, if we are to understand how this ideological term is utilized to manipulate people's consciousness and conceal the power of its effect. According to Biesta (2004a), Bruce Charlton has distinguished two different meanings of accountability: a technical-managerial meaning and a more general meaning. The former refers narrowly to institutions' duty to present audited (or reviewed) reports to a system of external governance. The purpose of the auditing is primarily to detect incompetence and deter dishonesty in overall management issues. Beare (1991) argues that the contemporary omnipresent auditing culture represents the government's "distrust" of institutions and educators, and this is a crucial point being overlooked by advocates of decentralization. The more general accountability, in contrast, connotes traditional, educational professionalism which links to a system of (reciprocal) responsibility, rather than external governance (Biesta, 2004a). The professional meaning of accountability is one in which educators act in accordance with their commitment to democratic values such as social justice, freedom, equity and cooperation. Nonetheless, the current managerial practice

of accountability in the state clearly diverges from this more general form of educational professionalism, so that accountability is mistakenly seen as a measure of education quality. This absence of educational professionalism, in the view of Biesta (2004a) and Apple (2005), should be understood in the context of neo-liberalism's demand for the constant production of "evidence" that creates severe tension between institutional autonomy and state control.

Indeed, under the guise of accountability is an odd combination of autonomy and control: the Taiwanese managerial institutions' "autonomous" practices have to adapt to the state's regulations and conform to the principles of audit and transparency. Grounded in the sentiment that "transparent organizations are auditable, and auditable organizations are manageable" (Biesta, 2004a, p. 235), the centre monitors, controls and steers institutions' overall performance at a distance, through the regulation of the national curriculum, examination league tables, periodic student testing and publication of the number of certifying qualifications students acquire, the professional development activities staff attend, self-evaluated and externally-evaluated reports, and the surplus or deficit of the annual budget (MOE, 2011a, 2011b). Accountable performativity in the devolved governance of education should therefore be viewed as a disciplinary mechanism of the state, which Ball (1994) explicates rather aptly: "Steering at a distance is an alternative to coercive/prescriptive control. Constraints are replaced by incentives. Prescription is replaced by 'ex post' accountability based upon quality or outcome assessments. Coercion is replaced by self-steering – the appearance of autonomy" (p. 54). Clearly, the autonomy of institutions is manipulatively utilized by the central government as a trade-off for their increasing managerial or entrepreneurial efficiency and accountability. For this reason, Apple (2003) argues that the self-managing school reform is, in reality, "a massive re-centralization" (p. 15) which is best seen as "a process of de-democratization" (p. 15).

The process of de-democratization encompasses the reformation of a new apolitical, purely economic relationship between citizens and education. Neo-liberalism positions the consumer subject as a de-classed, possessive individual, an economically rational actor whose democratic practice ought to be better exercised in the private, economic domain than in the public, political space (Apple, 2003). This claim should be seen in the context of the neo-liberal's specific view on political virtue, incorporating the capitalist belief that almost everything can and should be de-politicized (or privatized) to protect individual liberty and to defend a particular way of life: the life of the self-interested individual who is assumed to be autonomous, self-determined and economically self-reliant (Olssen, 2010). Because everyone is presumed to desire such a life, the state necessarily has the duty to respect this aspiration of its citizens.

Biesta (2001), nevertheless, argues that such a way of life masks neo-liberalism's "politics of homogeneity" wherein plurality and difference in the public, political sphere are largely removed to secure the consensus that is deemed more suitable than dissonance for socio-political life. Hence, under the guise of respecting citizens' equal rights and freedom as well as promoting personal autonomy and responsibility, educational issues are relegated from the public, political space to one that is private and ultimately dependent on the subjective interests of individuals. In so doing, citizens have no right to decide about the aims and purposes of education, but merely to make choices about educational institutions. Like-minded politicians and elites are thus able to direct the path of education with little disturbance (Biesta, 2001). This condition, in the view of Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004), contributes to "states of domination" (p. 237), which means that citizens' transformative agency is blocked by a field of power relations exercised by some particular individual, social group or the government. While Taiwanese parents and students tend to believe that this accountable, managerial reform will enable them to be the chief beneficiaries of a

well-performed education, they are unaware that the form of rights and freedom they exercise has not only been privatized, but also de-ethicized.

There is, however, a possibility that my argument regarding the state's de-pluralization of the political community could be refuted, as two public hearings were held by CER (1996) regarding the privatization of secondary institutions. Yet such limited public discussion, in my view, would be better understood as an instrument of the centre to present marketized, performance-based education as a policy decision co-achieved with the efforts of the public. There is a need to question the state's right to privatize individual rights and freedom, on the grounds that we are all essentially the same: we all value autonomy and choice in education. It is important that we recognize how market freedom and rights can never replace the substantive form of freedom and rights that are so indispensable for a true socially democratic society. I shall argue here that the separated, economic acts of individuals in neo-liberalism's creation of a de-pluralized (or homogeneous) and depoliticized space (or private sphere) is not an affirmation, but a negation of freedom. As Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004) have made clear, freedom requires political liberty which necessarily involves our exercise of power. Freedom postulates moral problematization and exists only when we acknowledge that pluralism, differences, diversity, humility, respect, criticism, dissonance, resistance, contestation and negotiation are the prerequisite conditions for socio-political life. Freedom, then, is affirmed at the time when we, conditioned by our concern for the collective good, continuously engage with one another in difficult ethical questions in the public space.

Performativity: Mythicized Technicism and Scientism

In Chapter 4, I have argued how the Western value of scientific rationality affects the overall quality of education in Taiwan. With regard to this topic, I will extend my argument from the

point of the Taiwanese government's technological attitude to education to its irrational political-ideology of scientific technicality, and argue for a need to incorporate the role of sensitivity in educational activities.

Technological expectations about education reveal the idea that education is an instrument that can be used to achieve certain desired ends. While this can be said for all ideas of education, the more important questions we should be asking here are what these ends are, how they are justified, and whether or not they acknowledge the necessary *uncertainty* throughout educational processes and outcomes. For example, for the Taiwanese government, education is a means to pursue economic agendas, through its exertion of “invisible” power on the decentralized educational system to demand enhanced performance and a pre-determined, specific outcome. The government's technological expectations subject educational institutions to a system of distant control, usually with the aid of advanced technology. In an economy-driven educational discourse, the great capacity of educational technology is, by and large, reduced to a sole instrumental, technical aspect to ensure educational data are cost-effectively decoded, distributed, and monitored without the constraints of time and space (Lyotard, 1984; Roberts, 1998). Indeed, premised on efficiency, such technology is primarily used and promoted by the Taiwanese government to regulate, monitor and intervene in educational activities; a few examples are the National Student Learning Achievement Database Management System (MOE, 2011a), Lifelong Online System for Teachers' Professional Development (MOE, 2011b) and Learning Resource Center and IT Services (MOE, 2011b).

Essentially, efficiency is an instrumental value concerned with how to arrive at certain educational outcomes in a *secure* way (Biesta, 2010c). In this model, difficulties encountered in education are perceived not as political (e.g. structural factors), but technical

problems which, in principle, can be overcome or solved “externally” when the right way to proceed is found (Biesta, 2001, 2009b, 2010c). This can be seen, for instance, from the centre’s employment of the National Student Learning Achievement Database Management System to measure and compare learning outcomes between Taiwanese students and international students, for the provision of “effective strategies and remedial education when necessary” (MOE, 2011a, p. 4). Such a “value-free” system largely relies on *technical validity* which, in turn, shapes a false assumption that educational direction and practice can be uncomplicatedly decided purely on the basis of factual information (Biesta, 2009b, 2010c). What is being neglected in this approach is the crucial role of normative value judgement (or *normative validity*) that should always accompany the factual data. In other words, we need to evaluate the data and engage with values in the fields of educational evaluation and measurement to critically question “whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure” (Biesta, 2010c, p. 35).

For Freire (2004), neo-liberalism’s beliefs in technicism and scientism represent its “aggressive rationalism” (p. 5) and/or “myth-making irrationalism” (Freire, 1998c, p. 516). Such irrational rationality conceives teachers and students as “superior type[s] of robot” (Freire, 1998c, p. 516) who ought to engage with educational activities (or material reality) with “gloves and masks” (Freire, 1998a, p. xii) to pursue an “objective neutrality.” Yet, such neutrality is not only unreachable, but essentially illusionary in that educational processes always involve choice and decision-making exercised through an unequal power relation. This means that the way an educational problem is defined and approached is ultimately based on the dominators’ value-position, which is itself evident in the Taiwanese government’s belief in scientific technicality. The belief that education ought to be objectively managed is, however, much more political-ideological than scientific in nature.

Neo-liberalism seeks to strategically link science to its ideologies in order to mythicize the latter as commonsense understanding. As Fullbrook (2006) explicates: “before [neo-liberalism’s] ideas can function [commonly] and ideologically they must appear credible and so ideologies are most likely to emerge from those domains [science] whose authority is in the time and place the most uncontested” (p. 2). Biesta (2009b) argues that this political-ideological naturalizing process, as reflected in the international/national scientific measurement of students’ academic knowledge, de-legitimizes other forms of knowledge and perpetuates “the reproduction of social inequality through education” (p. 37). Hence, Biesta (2009b) and Freire (1998a, 1998c, 2004) remind us always to remain vigilant and critical of commonsensical knowledge (or naïve knowledge as Freire would term it) that is being constructed to serve the interests of some particular groups, while excluding others from having the same benefits.

Within a mythicized scientific discourse, teachers’ sensitivity and professional judgment are subordinated to a logical technicality that is viewed as an indiscriminating, impartial “arbitrator” of students’ performance. Nevertheless, Lyotard (1984) argues that it is neither possible, nor desirable to understand or determine human subjects and their activities in the mechanistic, neutral ways we would approach natural, static objects, given the inherent differences between natural sciences and social sciences: the human referent, unlike that of nature, is behavioural, communicative, social, historical, political, cultural and subjective, whose activities (e.g. students’ exam performance) are the result of their multilayered interaction with complex systems. This implies that a student’s underperformance can never be understood in a simply straightforward manner, as it is constituted by composite factors. For example, a student’s underperformance can be related to politics (who decides what counts as performance and how it should be measured), family situation (domestic violence and financial difficulty), personal attributes, health and so on. This in turn shows that

problems encountered in education are not solely technical or personal, but largely associated with economic and social politics. Thus, based on Lyotard's (1984) understanding, we may assert that he shares the same perspective as Freire (1998a, 1998b, 2004) regarding how educational activities ought to be essentially based not on *rationality*, but a *sensitivity* that discerns the relationship between a student's specific positionality and the broader structural discourse.

Neo-liberalism's rational, objective approach to assessing learning not only ignores the qualitative aspects of students' growth, but also the human interpretation that is so essential to fairness and justice in education. If equity and equality become merely formal in daily educational socialization, how can we expect our children to have values, beliefs, dispositions and actions other than what they are shown and experience? For this very reason, we need to be cautious about the way we approach, manage and assess educational activities, and the incorporation of sensitivity is, I believe, a necessity. To allow the emergence of sensitivity, dialogue between teachers and students is crucial. Communication encourages teachers and students to embrace the interaction between their intersubjectivity as well as the roles of feelings, affectivity, emotions and (social) ethics in educational processes (Freire & Shor, 1987). In this alternative model, the role of the teachers is no longer that of *emotionless factual-data followers*, but one of *attentive data-interpreters*, mindfully aware of their impartiality in their professional, sensible judgments. It is, after all, by shifting education from the single rational, technical realm to one that is emotionally sensible, that our children can respond to Others and their vulnerability with loving respect rather than economic calculation (Freire, 1998a, 1998b, 2004).

Performativity: Standardized Human Capital Training

This urgent need to replace economy with broader human concerns in the educational

priority is, however, undermined by world policy institutions that subjugate social democracy to individual careerism. A lifetime of unstable working conditions is described by the OECD (2000) as an inevitable feature of postmodernity, so education must correspondingly address the importance of lifelong entrepreneurship by shortening the distance between learning and work. The need for survival encourages educational stakeholders to think of human capital education as the solution, by developing a strong connection between school learning and future employment (Freire & Shor, 1987; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Societal fear for future unemployment or underemployment acts dialectically with the neo-liberal government's agenda of manipulating education for the needs of industries and the national economy.

Thus, "quality" education in the neo-liberal order is unproblematically equated with the provision of a set of functional skills and practical knowledge for students' economic success in labour market (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007). Lyotard's (1984) idea of performativity serves as an overarching principle for the formation of human capital, wherein education is reduced to an efficient, smooth training process (as minimal input) to maximize student productivity (learning outcome). Neo-liberal education conceives students as self-interested entrepreneurs who seek to maximize the fiscal return on their investment, and therefore the sum purpose of human existence is reduced to "merely the skill level and performance capacity of its population" (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004, p. 147). In respect to human capital education, Sen (1999) argues that while it explicitly acknowledges the role of human beings in developing the economy and sustaining economic growth, it explains nothing about why such development and growth is sought in the first place. From his perspective, this absence suggests that the development of the economy is purely for its own sake, rather than to support human well-being. Thus, rather than putting the cart before the

horse, Sen (1999) believes that economic systems should be designed to serve human beings and never the other way around.

In the view of Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006), the neo-liberal motive for human capital training is, by its very nature, more ideological than practical, as what seems to be a necessary job skill to learn today may be obsolete by the time students graduate. When this happens, what these graduates need to do is not question the causes, but seek more training opportunities to perpetually adapt into the global/national labour market. So long as individuals unquestioningly accept the need to always adapt their cognition to enhance their own productivity, it is conceivable that for institutions to teach democratic skills would be a mere distraction. It is precisely this unfortunate public neglect that enables the political ideologies and instrumental practices of neo-liberalism to maintain a dominant position.

In Taiwan, human capital development is proclaimed by the centre to be its “highest priority” (MOE, 2006a, p. 2) in that “the full potential of human resources urgently awaits to be transformed into national power” (p. 6). According to the Ministry of Education (2006b) and Kao (2005), the centre’s ambitious goal to become the business centre of the Asia-Pacific cannot be realized with Taiwanese students’ unsatisfactory competence in English (ranked 8th out of 15 Asian countries). Thus, based on a competency framework, the new *National Curriculum Guidelines, Including Compulsory English Subject* (MOE, 2011a) replaces the conventional focus on “grammatical and phonetic accuracy” with “oral communication fluency”. This significant shift is further accompanied with the designation of English as a quasi-official language (GIO, 2005) as well as new ideas of multi-faceted skills (e.g. ICT, problem-solving), effective learning strategies and self-directed lifelong learning (MOE, 2006c).

Notwithstanding the centre claims that these changes will better prepare students for the challenges of the labour market and allow them to “fully develop their potentials and walk the road of success through self-realization” (MOE, 2006a, p. 5), these changes seem directed toward domesticating student consciousness in a way that limits possibilities for alternative social realities other than the one that has already been prescribed by neo-liberalism. Under the guise of promoting a disposition of self-directive, lifelong learning, neo-liberalism encourages students to surrender to occupational uncertainty and job displacement, rather than to critique such an ideology, imposed in the interests of those in power (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Instead of exercising their political agency and inserting themselves into the world as transformative subjects, students become mere objects possessed by neo-liberal officials whose worldview does not accommodate alternative hopes or imaginings.

Grounded in a mechanistic, objectivist paradigm, neo-liberal education champions scientific neutrality and encourages students to simply describe and observe, and never to interpret or critically comprehend the relationship between reading of the word and reading of the world (Freire & Shor, 1987; Freire, 1998b). Despite the centre asserting that diversified learning content will develop students’ criticality and creativity (MOE, 2011a), its demand for institutions to adopt a textbook-based curriculum is at odds with such an expected outcome. Moreover, the pre-specified key competencies of the Curriculum Guidelines (MOE, 2011a) reflect the state’s encouragement for the continuance of a banking, monologue-based educational approach and an instrumentalist literacy. Students, for example, are expected to be “able to read stories and short passages”; “able to *describe* or write the main ideas in simple short sentences”; “able to *answer textbook questions* in written English”; “able to *retell* lesson content in English”; “able to fluently *read out* short stories and articles”; “able

to understand summaries of the lesson content or texts *introduced by the teacher* through the medium of English”; and “able to understand *teachers’ questions* concerning learning content” (pp. 25-27).

With regard to the latter two key competencies, it may be argued that they represent an unequal teacher-student relation underpinned by a sender-receiver model of communication. This suggests that the state’s education is still very much rooted in the modern mentality, in which knowledge is seen as an object that can be transferred without much need for interpretation. According to Biesta (2010a), this particular understanding is informed by Kant’s education model in which the teacher is viewed as the subject who already knows, whereas the meaning of knowable objects is something that can be uncomplicatedly transferred through a one-way communication, from the teacher (sender) to the minds of self-contained, rational, knowing student subjects. It is here that an asymmetrical relationship is shaped between the teacher and the students, while at the same time reducing education to a mere knowledge-transferring process. As successful communication in this model means to communicate “without change, without interpretation, without creativity....but [through] repetition” (Biesta, 2004b, p. 14), students cannot therefore become anything other than passive consumers of knowledge.

Yet education is not about consuming or memorizing information. It is rather a social process of participation, coordination, co-construction and transformation (Biesta, 2004b; Freire & Shor, 1987). Thus I contend, with Biesta (2004b) and Freire and Shor (1987), that it is necessary for education to be rebuilt on a participatory model. Such a model would strive to diminish the distance between teacher and students; yet it would not falsely claim an equal position between teacher and students because it recognizes their distinct educational responsibility. In this model, the teacher would not try to silence his/her students or expect

them to mechanically repeat his/her discourse. Instead, the teacher would validate the knowledge of students and encourage dynamic, respectful classroom interaction and critical comprehension so that the *relational (social)* character of education and the centrality of *interpretation* in communication are not denied, but respected. In so doing, the social situation that emerges from the teacher-students interaction will enable all participants to make continuous adjustments in their own understanding, their own ways of responding and seeing, and finally to introduce shared understanding and coordinated actions (Biesta, 2004b).

A participatory education, as the name suggests, invites all members to participate in the meaning construction process – a process in which attention is necessarily paid to students' learning of substantial democratic capabilities, such as public contestation, negotiation and respectful criticism. Such a process is, however, omitted in the state's education that arguably seeks not only to enforce educational authoritarianism, but also political authoritarianism. Throughout the Curriculum Guidelines (MOE, 2011a), there is no trace of developing the political skills students require to be participating members of a democratic country. Similarly unmentioned are the learning of democratic dialogue, structural critique or critical reflection on the relationship between the theoretical context (word-world) and the concrete context (real-world). Even under the headings of logical thinking, judgmental ability and creativity, students are merely expected to be "able to compare, contrast and order the information"; "able to speculate cause and effect according to a given text"; and "able to distinguish facts from opinions" (p. 27). Based on "neutral instrumentality", the state's education, in providing no space for public discussion, is intended to secure students' political conformity: insofar as the possibility for social criticism is eliminated or promptly silenced, the centre's political agenda is able to proceed without hindrance. Under such

circumstances, Article 6 of the Educational Fundamental Act seems to be ever ironic: “education must take a neutral position and be free from any political manipulation” (Laws and Regulations Database of the Republic of China, 2011).

After sabotaging the possibility of making the classroom a place for public discussion, the performative state takes one further step to subvert “unofficial knowledge” and equality in education. This can be seen, for example, from the state’s division of the Curriculum Guidelines (MOE, 2011a) into basic and advanced standards. With regard to this, it is important to question why standards are needed in the first place and how they impact on educational practices. From the perspective of Freire and Shor (1987), the language of standards is “a deeply ideological concept” (p. 71), used primarily to normalize official knowledge, while rendering other equally important ways of knowing invisible. What is being overlooked by this de-pluralization approach is the way social intellectualism is only possible to the extent that the individual is able to think differently and independently, which is literally not possible when homogenized subjectivity is imposed on all. On the other hand, neo-liberalism’s concern with educational performativity reduces the elements worth keeping to those deemed to contribute to efficiency in English teaching and learning.

As evident in the *Curriculum Guidelines* (MOE, 2011a), teachers are required to impart and students learn the most frequently-used English vocabulary (4,500 words for basic level students and 7,000 words for those in the advanced level) regulated by the state, whereas lengthy readings, and occasionally-used grammatical structures and vocabularies are to be excluded (MOE, 2011a). According to the Ministry of Education (2011a), the use of different English curriculum standards is intended to cater for students with different “needs”, needs that can only be realized within an ability-grouping learning environment.

The centre's talk of "needs" presents the practice of streaming teaching as a benevolent aid to undeserving students; in reality, such an inequitable practice is not meant to meet each student's needs, but to ensure the learning of the advanced-level students will not be "dragged down" by their basic-level counterparts (Joshee, 2009). To make it explicit, the real value of ability-grouping and/or streaming teaching lies in its capacity to strengthen educational performativity, which is more for the sake of the centre than the individual student. It is paradoxical that neo-liberalism rejects any possibility of education being debated from a collective totality viewpoint, and yet assumes the right to talk *for* students about their personal needs. This is a typical situation that manifests neo-liberalism's authoritarian nature, for its need-talk negates students' right to define their collective and personal needs. For this reason, Taiwanese citizens must stay consciously alert to neo-liberal myths, such as the need for ability-grouping, that are intended to direct us away from educational democracy and equality. What is crucial here is our clear-mindedness about the true purposes of educational activities, which then necessitates a problematization of the modern concept of ability.

Within the modern, mechanistic discourse where "minds [are viewed] as empty vessels and schools as factories" (Gilbert, 2005, p. 86), ability is understood as a person's fixed inborn quality. Since it is a "pre-given", ability is widely accepted as something that can be unproblematically used to (pre)determine how far a student can go. Consequently, the purpose of education is "materialized" when students with differentiated abilities acquire different pre-programmed knowledge for their pre-specified careers. Nevertheless, if postmodern education is to catch the knowledge wave, the grounding of such a chain of thoughts ought to be shifted to one where "minds [are conceived] as bodies and schools as gymnasias" (p. 86). If we rethink minds as bodies which, although they come in different sizes and shapes, can all be expanded and developed, the meaning of ability is

correspondingly shifted from a fixed quality to a highly pliable mental capacity. On this basis, the task of education is no longer about sorting students out through the use of standardized testing, but about facilitating them to develop “fitter minds” (p. 85) through the design of contextualized, challenging activities. Such facilitation requires educators to situate learning within students’ personal “starting” ability level, so that those whose mental potential used to be refuted are now equally acknowledged and their potential maximized.

Neo-liberalism’s standardized education that seeks to overcome difference and achieve immediate temporal certainty cannot be justified on the ground of “equality” (Biesta, 2001; Gilbert, 2005). As Gilbert (2005, 2010) makes clear, equality is not the same as “sameness”, as though equality is something actualized when every student achieves the same performance at the same given time, and in the same given space. The result of a one-size-fits-all education system, Gilbert (2010) continues, “is not equal opportunity, but the reverse: the reproduction of existing inequalities” (p. 68). This is because when equality is conceived in essentialism¹⁹ – the same ways of being, thinking and doing – any difference can only be understood as a deficit, rather than a challenge that necessarily requires our educational responsibility (Gilbert, 2010). If human pluralism in education is to be respected and protected, it is important that we understand the impossibility of generalizing human beings: it is “men, not Man, [who] live on the earth and inhabit the world” (Arendt, 1989, p. 7). Equally important is a rethinking of *equality as different but equal* (Gilbert, 2005, 2010), so that individual students’ different approaches to learning, and

¹⁹ Essentialism, the one-size-fits-all model of individuality and equality, does not account for difference, thereby excluding a large proportion of the population. Thus, a reconceptualization of personhood and equality on the basis of the “politics of difference” (Gilbert, 2010, p. 71) is urgently needed, if difference is to *be* and to express itself on its own terms, rather than be either assimilated or excluded.

different forms of learning results, are encouraged and acknowledged. With that said, education ought not to make each and every student measure up to a pre-specified learning outcome; instead, education needs to find a way to respond ethically to human diversity. With respect to the outcome of education, Freire and Shor (1987) explicate that it is “not just getting what you insist will be the end result of an exercise”, because it is “a problem [of politics] and not a certainty” (p. 85).

Indeed, education ought to operate in the region of uncertainty, in that it is not certainty, but uncertainty that gives us hope for the continuous search for a different future.

Neo-liberalism’s fatalistic, gypsy-fortuneteller discourse refutes any possibility of change that can be brought about by hope, as if the current educational condition in the state is indeed inevitable. The Taiwanese people ought not to accept such a political philosophy that seeks not to “propose truths”, but to impose its “absolute truth.” It is important that we understand that our existence in this world is not to “merely realize a programme previously arranged” (Olssen, 2010, p. 211), but to learn how we can change the world for the better, from negotiating and debating our absolute differences.

In the face of neo-liberalism’s economic-imperative²⁰ discourse, our mobilization of hope and commitment for social change is indispensable to the realization of justice and equality (Biesta, 2006b). Because hope intrinsically involves an element of uncertainty, we shall not

²⁰ Neo-liberalism is an inadequate philosophy to reconcile social justice and economy, as its belief in economic supremacy is insensitive to human insufficiency. This is evident in the conclusion of UNESCO (1999) about an economic-structured education: whether or not effective school reform will contribute to greater educational equity, equality and quality is “yet to be demonstrated” (p. 22). Such a conclusion is truly concerning, for it suggests that economic concerns must firstly taken be care of, and if we “choose”, we can then address human suffering and misery.

expect to foresee the outcome of our actions, as if we do so, we are not searching for hope, but for that temporal certainty we are opposed to in neo-liberalism. Education for the service of people, who are insufficient beings and always becoming, ought not be reduced to a standardized process of technical-instrumental training. Instead, it should be conceived as a permanent process of “hope-filled search” (Freire, 2004, p. 100) in which students are free to create many different “prophetic thoughts” (p. 104) – thoughts that are not concerned with predicting themselves but with different possibilities for a more humanized future society.

Concluding Remarks

Regardless of superficial appearances, the Taiwanese effective school reform is being implemented to preserve the state’s controlled position in order to avoid more challenging social transformation. The measure of technical-managerial accountability effectively distracts the public’s attention away from economic and academic inequality structured by the existing power-relation, standardized education and quantitatively measured performance. It is important to emphasize that the particular behaviours elicited from institutions by this form of accountability are intended to suit the needs of the national economic system and government officials, rather than encourage true professionalism and responsibility (Biesta, 2004a). The principle of performativity that seeks to efficientize the educational processes fails to see how it is really our children, rather than the economy, that are at the centre of education. Equally unrecognized is how the educational idea of instrumentalist neutrality, that reinforces mind-narrowing educational practices and an unquestioning population, is incapable of developing the type of knowledge “partners” needed by the contemporary economy.

Moreover, the emphasis on personal autonomy in the educational marketplace, rather than on alternative pedagogical approaches, evaluation and design, demonstrates not only the

centre's encouragement for the continuance of modern banking, transmission pedagogies and a modern and/or neo-liberal framework of education, but also neglect of the social nature of knowledge-based education and its precondition of social solidarity. To achieve social cohesion, the norm of *responsibilization* is indeed important – important not because it equalizes autonomy, but because it equalizes power between people: it ensures conditions for the [individual's] development of capabilities; for rights and entitlements to develop freely, without interference” (Olssen, 2010, p. 175). Clearly, such a form of responsibilization requires much more than negative freedom that takes into account and takes care of not merely the external, but the internal impediments to individuals' development, concerning such things as inadequate skills, knowledge, awareness and resources (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004). In other words, we need a true democratic state that is not capitalist, but egalitarian in essence, so that everyone is provided with an acceptable living standard and equal educational access, so that education is no longer perceived entirely economically or vocationally, but also democratically, professionally, emotionally and intellectually, so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed, and come to see that while they are owed, they also owe each other and the society. After all, within a socially democratic state, responsibility can be intrinsically shouldered by, rather than externally imposed upon, each citizen. Also, the intrinsic duty that the individual voluntarily takes on for their society is that those events that may or may not be directly in his/her interests are morally responded to and respectfully addressed.

Finally, I shall clarify that what I object to is not the educational reform itself, but the economic forces beyond the state's restructuring processes, and the state's uncritical approach in which new ideas are distorted to fit into the framework of conventional practices. Without changing the existing epistemological discourse in Taiwan, the importation of these new concepts, Gilbert (2010) firmly asserts, “will not change things

[because] the ‘new’ term will simply be mobilized to serve ‘old’ purposes” (p. 73). Thus, if a knowledge society is truly desired by the Taiwanese people, I contend, with Gilbert (2005, 2010), that what is crucially needed is a paradigm shift or wholesale change, so the Taiwanese people are able to radically break away from the past (e.g. examination imperialism and academic darwinism), to seriously rethink the purposes and aims of education, and co-construct a true democratic society that takes human pluralism as the foundation, and commits to an uncompromising pursuit of fairness and equity.

Chapter Eight:

THE SOCIAL INVESTMENT STATE AND LIFELONG SURVIVAL STRATEGY

In the face of shifting political, economic and social circumstances, neo-liberalism has recreated itself from the earlier Thatcherite market capitalism (or Second Way) to Giddens' Third Way politics in the late 1990s. Giddens (2003) explains that the Third Way is "about the modernization of social democracy" (p. 1), through the individual's assumption of a correct balance between personal responsibility and incentive motivation, the reduction of social exclusion, and collaboration between the public and private sectors. This new form of neo-liberalism is thus described by Jary (2005) as "the only show in town capable of responding realistically and progressively to post-modern requirements" (p. 639), whereas Mouzelis (2001) regards it highly as a moral project of "humanization of capitalism" (p. 436). Such a romanticized view of the Third Way must, however, be resisted and problematized, for it is still firmly rooted in the belief that there is no alternative to economic globalization, market technology, and competitive individualism (Anderson, 2000; Codd, 2005; Ferguson, 2004; Fitzsimons, 2006; Keman, 2010; Newman & McKee, 2005; Palley, 2004; Perkins, Nelms & Smyth, 2005; Roberts, 2009; Wang & Loncar, 2009). In order to demonstrate how neo-liberal ideologies of instrumental pragmatism and economic rationalism structure the 2000-2008 Taiwanese educational policies and the way their "inclusiveness" perpetuates existing inequalities, this chapter will investigate two primary themes: targeted social investment for the enhancement of economic productivity, and lifelong learning as a marketable service and a labour market survival strategy.

Targeted Social Investment for the Enhancement of Economic Productivity

Taiwan's declining birthrate and an aging population have led to the problem of a shrinking labour market. According to the statistical data provided by Chiu and Wei (2011), the

number of infants born in the state has dropped from 375,500 in 1980 to 292,700 in 2000, a decrease of 22 %. The crises of a declining birthrate and a low percentage of females in a labour market aiming at full participation are not, however, exclusive to Taiwan. As the OECD claims in *Babies and Bosses – Reconciling Work and Family Life* (2004), such crises are universal in developed countries, severely stifling the progression of international and national economies. A panacea is thus suggested by the OCED (2004), according to which effective public investments are critical, involving better incentives to encourage women to work and increased childcare assistance. In conformity with the policy scripts of the global authority, in Taiwan the Executive Yuan's *Great Warmth Social Welfare Package Program*, which encompasses a wide range of family/childcare friendly policies, is formulated in CEPD's (2007b) *Economic Development Vision for 2015: First Stage Three-Year Sprint Program (2007-2009)*, and has been implemented since 2000 through the joint efforts of the Executive Yuan and the Ministry of Education. For the sake of relevance, this section will investigate only the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policies, with a specific focus on the 2000 Preschool Education Voucher Program (MOE, 2005a), and the 2008 Infant Care Subsidies (CEPD, 2007b).

The 2008 Infant Care Subsidies policy (CEPD, 2007b) "rewards" average families (families with an income of less than 1.5 million New Taiwanese Dollars (NTD) per year) and disadvantaged families who "choose" to send their children to an infant care centre while the parents work. Average families are entitled to receive a 3,000NTD monthly subsidy for each infant in care, on condition that one of the parents is currently employed. This means that no subsidy will be granted if both parents are unemployed. On the other hand, disadvantaged families are all entitled to infant care subsidies, yet the amount of subsidy is distributed according to the parents' present employment situation: 5000NTD monthly subsidy is given to the family which has one working parent, whereas when both parents are jobless, such a

family can receive a 2,000NTD maximum monthly subsidy, on condition that they agree to participate in vocational training or actively search for work. This in turn leads one to question the principle of fairness and equity, in that a family without any income would logically need more grant than a family with income, regardless of how limited it is. For what reason, then, would the latter receive more than twice the subsidy as the former?

This circumstance, in the view of Perkins, Nelms and Smyth (2005), is directly related to neo-liberalism's abandonment of the "welfare state" to favour the model of a "workfare state". Underpinned by the paradigm of "productivism" (p. 38), the goal of a workfare state is to achieve more active labour market participation or full employment. Correspondingly, the traditional focus of redistributive welfare right is replaced with a focus on productivist reordering of social policy. The underlying assumption is that well-resourced social assistance programmes are counterproductive to the state's economic performance, encouraging citizens, whether explicitly or implicitly, to leave their jobs or remain jobless (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Thus, minimal assistance benefits and certain incentives are offered as a euphemistic expression of "no rights without responsibilities" (Perkins, Nelms & Smyth, 2005, p. 38), meaning people can no longer expect that citizenship will provide them with "something for nothing" (Lister, 2003, p. 432). What this requires for average families and disadvantaged families (with a very low income) in Taiwan is their "responsiveness" to the demand of neo-liberalism's ideal citizens – ideal because they assume a correct balance between *incentive motivation*, *opportunities* and *obligations* to counteract personal unproductivity and inactivity. In other words, only when families shoulder their personal responsibility to seek employment opportunities can they be integrated into a productivist society as "normal" members, and supported according to their contribution.

Thus, the true value of the ECEC policies, I shall argue, does not reside so much in social justice and equality, but in their capacity to raise workforce motivation and enhance productivity and market profitability. The 2000 Preschool Education Voucher Program (MOE, 2005a), for example, issues vouchers to subsidize the tuition of five year old children from economically, culturally and regionally disadvantaged families. Yet it is incomprehensible why the subsidy is limited to five-year-olds, instead of being available to all preschool-aged, disadvantaged children. Equally inconceivable is that parents who wish to receive the subsidy must enrol their children in a kindergarten that is both *licensed* and *privately* owned. Five-year olds who are enrolled in the public ECEC services are excluded because the state has already shared a partial cost of these facilities (Chiu & Wei, 2011). This conditional voucher distribution, according to Wang and Loncar (2009), was determined in the late 1990s as the result of bargaining between government officials and private kindergarten owners. By helping private enterprises to have a better (price) footing to compete against each other and kindergartens in the public system, the state expects them to provide “quality” services that will better meet the needs of working parents (such as extended service hours) and undergo the state’s licencing process if they have not yet done so (Lee, 2009). Such a seamless public-private partnership created by the ECEC policies revitalizes the childcare and licencing market and, in the meantime, effectively solves the problem of the “inefficient use of labourer market resources” (Fitzsimon, 2006, p. 163). What is being overlooked, however, is perpetuation of the existing social stratification via the rhetoric of promoting greater equality through the choice-based voucher programme.

While not denying such a programme does provide a certain degree of social equity, the occurrence of “silent” social exclusion, and the casual equation of educational quality with the state licencing process or the outcome of market competition, deserve serious interrogation. Defined by the rules of voucher policies, parents who enrol their children in a

non-licensed kindergarten are constructed as “irresponsible” and thus can be unproblematically excluded from receiving educational vouchers (Lee, 2009). This demonstrates how the state omits to consider the fundamental question of why parents would “choose” a non-licensed kindergarten in the first place (for example, no neighbouring licensed private kindergarten, and the problem of transportation). Furthermore, the assumption that quality in early childhood education can be assured by state licensing or market competition is mistaken, given that the checklist mentality inherent in the licensing process can at most provide “quantifiable” evidence. Such measurements, Lee (2009) argues, coupled with a market technology in which kindergartens are obliged to advertize, are inappropriate for the qualitative and ethical nature of education.

Notwithstanding some local scholars, such as Chiu and Wei (2011) and Lee (2009), have condemned the ECEC policies for devaluing parental care in children’s early development, the Executive Yuan (CEPD, 2007b) proudly announces that the mobilization of the “underused” capital of 65,000 women is the fruitful outcome of its effective investment strategies. Informed by neo-liberalism’s pragmatic instrumentalism and economic rationalism, this language of investment connotes a sense of fiscal return (Perkins, Nelms & Smyth, 2005), which once again distinguishes the state from a social welfare polity. As a *social investment state*, the Executive Yuan (CEPD, 2007b) conforms to the principles of “*passively* assisting the poor” and “*actively* investing in human capital” (p. 31) to ensure economic productivity, which must not be confused with a “social welfare state” that acts in accordance with the principles of fairness and equity for the sake of social egalitarianism. A social welfare polity is one where the government accepts a significant, “unconditional” obligation to meet the needs of all citizens by ensuring that each receives the necessary basic goods and social services, while at the same time, focusing on wealth distribution to minimize the socio-economic inequities introduced by malicious capitalism

(Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). The Executive Yuan (CEPD, 2007b), in contrast, pays little regard to citizens' needs and vulnerability, and considers social welfare programmes ought to be "selective, aiming at the targeted groups" (p. 31) and defensible only if they can generate the best economic outcomes. Thus, the idea of inclusiveness in a social investment state is argued by Perkins, Nelms and Smyth (2005) to be inherently discriminatory, as opportunities are being conditionally redistributed to address citizens' inactivity, rather than the causes of their unproductiveness.

While we may view this very conditionality of a social investment state as manifesting its socially exclusive essence, such conditionality is, however, perceived by Beista (2011) as a representation of absolute social inclusiveness. It is all-inclusive in the sense that no individual citizen is able to escape from this police order; it is an order in which "everyone has a particular place, role, position or identity" (p. 144). After all, the average families, the disadvantaged families, and the parents of pre-school children have a clear place and obligations in Third Way democracy. In other words, it is by including equally everyone not in the running of the order, but *in* the order,²¹ that social exclusion is being (re)produced as the result of the Third Way's commitment to equality (Biesta, 2011).

Lifelong Learning as a Marketable Service and a Labour Market Survival Strategy

Driven by extrinsic worth in terms of increased productive efficiency, the agenda of reducing social and labour market exclusion is paramount for an investment state. Such a precept is endorsed by the OECD in *Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth* (2010), wherein

²¹ In this order, each citizen is equally responsible for taking advantage of the incentive opportunities provided by socio-economic policies, actively transforming and enhancing the economic competitiveness of the self as well as of the nation. Each is "integrated" in the police order of a productivist state, and anyone who is unable to achieve the expectations of this "integration" is regarded as "abnormal", as he/she is acting "out of the order" and thus ought to be excluded.

Asian member states are urged to re-structure their linear, academic-dominated education system and forsake the “study first, then work” transition model. For the OECD (2010), Asian education must turn to emphasize the worth of vocational competence and experience, so that young people are able to “get a firm foothold in the labour market” (p. 54), rather than becoming a “lasting social cost for society” (p. 69). The development of a comprehensive lifelong learning infrastructure, with the market characteristics of flexibility, diversification, choice and individualization, is particularly highlighted by the OECD (2010) as indispensable for the employability of all, especially those who have been historically undeserving and marginalized. Contemporary Taiwanese educational policies thus have specific foci on the promotion of a disposition to lifelong learning, and the combination of work and study (as in learning by “doing”), particularly for the economically and academically disadvantaged. This can be seen, for example, in the Ministry of Education’s attempt to establish an inclusive lifelong learning infrastructure to facilitate a smoother transition from work to school and vice versa, through implementing the policies of *Towards a Learning Society - Part Three* (2006d), and *Enforcing the Objective of Teaching Students According to Their Aptitude and Improving Skills Education* (2007c).

Nonetheless, I contend that under the guise of such an inclusive lifelong education is an ulterior motive that seeks not only to legitimate, but also expand the capitalist mode of production and consumption. This can be identified from *Towards a Learning Society – Part Three*’s (2006d) strategies of (1) the establishment of a multiple entry route system; (2) the provision of “second chance” recurrent education to nontraditional students; (3) the diversification of Higher Education; and (4) the development of academic-industry partnership. With regard to (1), the multiple entry route system, it is important to firstly clarify that this is not the same as the *Multiple Entrance System* (MOE, 2007a), in that the former is used solely to admit nontraditional students, such as those who have discontinued

school education for some time and now want to reenter school. Encompassing various flexible entry routes, including recommendation, interview, application, credits and occupation licence, such a system is apt to create more market conditions for (2), rather than the equal educational opportunity declared by the state. In relation to (2), educational institutions at different levels are responsible for providing personalized courses (e.g. adult basic/continuing education, degree/non-degree courses, certificate courses and qualification programmes) with flexible studying hours (e.g. daytime, evening, weekend) and optional learning conduits (e.g. on-campus, synchronous and asynchronous virtual learning) to suit the needs of nontraditional students. The underlying assumption is that the supply of flexible, diverse and individualized learning programmes will encourage students, as self-interested knowledge capitalists, to always demand and purchase education to enhance personal performance. When the capitalist consumption of “all” is activated, the neo-liberal state’s economic competitiveness is strengthened accordingly (Roberts, 1999b).

The idea of “all” in the contemporary inclusive economy, as Codd (2005) points out, is no longer confined to a limited national population, but extended to citizens of the world. Likewise, the Ministry of Education’s (2006d) goal of “expansion of target students” (p. 6) directs a necessity for educational institutions to move their marketing scope beyond the state to attract more potential international customers. According to strategy (3), this needs to be done in such a way that institutions “discard [their] traditional role of ‘palace of knowledge’ [or] ‘intellectual ivory tower’”(p. 6) and fully “support [the] new university function” (MOE, 2002, p. 4). This new function conceives tertiary education as “a billion dollar export industry” (Codd, 2005, p. 199) which can be and should be utilized by the state to increase economic profitability and productivity. Aiming to carve up the global economic pie, the commercialization of educational services is upheld by the centre: Taiwan’s unique aspects, particularly language (Mandarin, Taiwanese and Hakanese), culture, history and

business, are portrayed as the best selling points and the most profitable when options of on-campus courses and distance courses are both provided. Every educational activity described in the document *Towards a Learning Society – Part Three* (MOE, 2006d) is to be arranged in conformity with the logic of “market flexibility”: not only should the management and admission of international/national students be flexible enough to attract customers, but pedagogical methods and curricula also need to be designed “for the convenience of students” (p. 7) or in a way that is “relevant” to their needs – needs that are devoid of educational rigour, purpose, structure and content, but inextricably tied to their personal careerism.

As the predominant neo-liberal apparatuses, the World Bank (2004) and OECD (2010) are largely responsible for the serious omission of important educational discussion, given their misconstruction of lifelong learning as nothing more than a job-(re)training strategy for citizens to survive in the competitive labour market. In the face of occupational uncertainty, the World Bank (2004) claims:

workers need to be lifelong learners, *adapting* continuously to changed opportunities and to the labor market demands of the knowledge economy. Lifelong learning is more than education and training beyond formal schooling. A comprehensive program of lifelong-learning education for dynamic economies, within the context of the overall development framework of each country, encompasses all levels (n.p.).

Evidently, social reality in neo-liberal lifelong learning society is portrayed as static and unchangeable. This fatalistic presumption of inevitability that serves as “the law of gravity” (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 6) reduces the role of learner to one who docilely accepts personal responsibility for perpetual workforce adaptation. As a consequence,

educational institutions are rendered as mere production factories whose primary task is to prepare students with the skills and knowledge required by the global/national business industries (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007). When society internalizes the conviction that education ought to be effective and pragmatic, with an almost unilateral focus on preparation for work, any alternative interpretation of lifelong education that values democratic learning more than economic productivity becomes simply idealistic.

Adhering to the instrumental conception of lifelong learning, the OECD (2010) has reasserted that students' early immersion in the world of business is "a step in the right [educational] direction" (p. 83), better enabling them to achieve self-actualization. Despite such a claim being unsupported, the Ministry of Education (2006d) eagerly urges educational institutions and business industries to establish "a mutually positive and prosperous partnership" (p. 15). An effective partnership, as described in strategy (4), is pivotal in that business corporations, unlike the central government, have sufficient resources and funds to invest in the lifelong development of human capital. As "human capital is the greatest asset in business...a powerful source for increasing the production in business" (p. 13), private enterprises' expanded tentacles in educational activities are misconstrued by the state as something natural and normal. Rather than posing critical questions about why the public-private partnership is sought in the initial stage, the state exaggeratedly pronounces that citizens' full potential cannot be developed without the "facilitation" of private enterprise. As a consequence, everyone is expected by the Ministry of Education (2006d) to be unquestioningly "*admiring* business to arrange learning programs for the[ir own] career development" (p. 14).

As a catalyst of an efficient public-private partnership, the Ministry of Education's policy of *Enforcing the Objective of Teaching Students According to Their Aptitude and Improving Skills Education* (2007c), which consists of the Skills Education Program, and the accompanying *Industry-Academy Hand-in-Hand Program* (2007d), is implemented to "help financially weaker students [to] become excellent workers" (2007c, p. 2). As a career guidance mechanism, the Skills Education Program (2007c) targets economically disadvantaged ninth-graders who exhibit "obscure academic tendencies" (p. 1). In accordance with personal interests and needs, each student in this programme is allowed to choose four out of 13 government-specified vocational courses per semester. This once again verifies that the choices of the learners are, more often than not, externally circumscribed by the political, that is, the state's regulation, and hence hardly autonomous or neutral.

Throughout the Skills Education Program (2007c) there is no identification of these 13 vocational occupations and training providers, nor is there any explanation of the practical training procedure. Not only is the programme poorly described, it is also impossible to understand the message that the policy writer intends to deliver in his/her written English: "the curriculum of each family shall contain family summary and two or more subjects" (p. 1). It seems somehow ironic that one of the state's major educational goals is to enhance teachers' and students' English competence, yet some English versions of official policy documents do not even make sense. To take another example, the problem of university graduates' high unemployment rate is interpreted by the Ministry of Education (2002) as follows: "university graduates are unable to meet the demands of industry due to their poor understanding of democracy and poor learning attitudes upon entering university" (p. 2).

Even if it is possible to understand the latter claim as neo-liberalism's common strategy of "blaming the victims", it is incomprehensible why the unemployment of graduates is related to their knowledge of democracy, rather than structural changes in the broader global/national business industries. Charging students with inadequate awareness of democracy, the state seems to forget the impossibility of them being familiar with something they have hardly experienced. So, if the sentence is to make some sense, I suggest that we read it as "university graduates are unable to meet the demands of industry due to their insufficient understanding of the way capitalist democracy operates".

Finally, I argue that while the difficult-to-understand English in the policy documents reflects the casual attitudes of government officials when they are dealing with very important educational issues, the inadequate policy information implies that there is no need for dialogic communication as whatever the centre decides is what is needed by citizens, who will necessarily be in agreement. This monological communication that treats citizens as "non-knowing", "non-thinking" objects possessed by the state, and seeks to keep individuals in unreflective ignorance, fails to recognize that governance is not supposed to be easy and comfortable, but productively difficult, with stability and happiness maintained by encouraging the population's curiosity so that they permanently search for, rather than deny knowledge (Roberts, 2012).

With reference to the *Industry-Academy Hand-in-Hand Program* (MOE, 2007d), this apprenticeship programme articulates the vocational learning of graduates from the Skills Education Program (MOE, 2007c), and encourages flexibility, practicality, and instrumentality. As the Ministry of Education (2007d) puts it:

the cooperation program combines high vocational schools [*sic*], colleges and institutes of technology and industry [including skills and technician certifying industry] and connects to the existing education system through *vertical flexibility*. The school and industry plan and design the curriculum together to realize to [*sic*] the spirit of being *practical* and *useful*...so that students at 16-22 could obtain good career development...[and] positive work ethics...to fulfill the [nation's] manpower needs (pp. 1-2).

Students who undertake this program have two options in relation to the work-study arrangements: first, practising as part time SME workers during winter and summer breaks for the first two years and as fulltime SME workers in the last year; or second, practising on-shift at school and at the SME (three months' study at school and three months' work at the SME) throughout three years of schooling. In the *Industry-Academy Hand-in-Hand Program* document (MOE, 2007d), apprentice students are portrayed as the greatest beneficiaries, in that they are not only provided with a secured income source, but also with opportunities to "earn" themselves either a guaranteed entrance to technical university with an affiliated Master Industry Program, or guaranteed employment upon graduation. These claims, however, neglect several important issues which are problematized below.

This apprenticeship system, which provides secure though very modest earnings for economically disadvantaged students, is assumed by the state to be something that will ameliorate their impoverishment. While this assumption may be true to some extent, it nevertheless overlooks how these students are marginalized by the existing social and economic structures in the first place. For Lankshear (1993), offering temporary financial relief to neo-liberalism's most visible victims is a rather superficial, hypocritical approach to addressing social and economic inequalities. Such a form of assistance is by nature

paternalistic, uncritically assuming that the problem of poverty lies within the individual, rather than in economic structural systems (Freire, 1996; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Lankshear, 1993). Accordingly, Freire (1996) proposes that it is not false, but true generosity that should lead arrangements in education, so that, he continues: “these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world (p. 27).

The state not only fails to acknowledge the structural causes of economic disparity, but also omits to mention the empirical evidence that demonstrates the exploitative SMEs’ working conditions. According to the report of the Taiwan Alliance for the Rights and Welfare of Cooperative Education (TARWCE, 2011), students are exploited in many different ways, ranging from the under-provision of contracted meals, limited break time (5 minutes per hour as the maximum), low working insurance, under-paid salary (NTD\$ 12,000 or NZD\$ 521 per month compared to the minimum salary of NTD\$ 17,880 or NZD\$ 777 regulated by the Council of Labor Affairs), unpaid overtime hours (approximately 20-40 overtime hours per month) to the deduction of salary without being informed of the reasons. Many students complain that some teachers either skip their daily duty of patrolling the SMEs, or fail to negotiate with the SMEs to protect students’ rights (TARWCE, 2011). Further, the TARWCE’s (2011) online survey of the *Industry-Academy Hand-in-Hand Program* indicates an irrelevant relationship between the apprentice students’ areas of vocational study and their training in the SMEs. Thus, we may assume that the increasing growth of apprentice students (from 16,728 in 1997 to 35,246 in 2008) is being utilized by the SMEs to fulfill their cost-cutting employment need. The benefits generated by this apprenticeship system, I shall argue, of cost-effectiveness for SMEs and a balanced supply and demand in the labour market, accrue not so much to students but to the state and its economic backbone – business enterprises.

Lastly, but no less important, the meritocratic ideology beyond the centre's promise of guaranteed rewards, and its untrue statement about equality of educational opportunity for all students, from the most academic to those with mediocre vocational performance, must be challenged. Rooted in the neo-liberal belief of "competitive meritocratism" (Andersen & Hjør-Madsen, n.d., p. 4), the state's reward mechanism is not designed to ensure every student has an equal opportunity to succeed, given that those who are less vocationally competitive or unable to achieve "excellence" are substantially excluded. Further exploration and critique of meritocracy will be implemented in Chapter 9. For now, let us focus on the Ministry of Education's (2007d) response to those students who are excluded from being rewarded with assured employment and/or tertiary education. In the *Industry-Academy Hand-in-Hand Program* document (2007d), these student "Others" are delineated as benefiting from an intangible form of advantage which strengthens their "confidence to face the future challenges in their careers" (p. 2). The document (2007d) continues to fallaciously depict them as sharing with their academic counterparts the same opportunity of further study by taking the National Joint University Entrance Examination. Such an assumption overlooks how the Skill Program (MOE, 2007c) and the *Industry-Academy Hand-in-Hand Program* (MOE, 2007d) both target "low academic achievers" in the first place. Thus, the question that needs to be asked here is, to what extent do these students who fail firstly in the academic and then in the vocational areas have an equal opportunity to succeed in the standardized, academic-dominated national examination?

Towards Freirean Lifelong Learning: A Journey for Ethical and Political Humanization

Being misguided by the neo-liberal human capital framework of lifelong education,

educational stakeholders engage solely with actions (like instrumental learning, credential building and job preparation) that work for the market economy, but this trend signals a danger of (re)production of an irresponsible, economically self-interested population (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007). The utilitarian criteria employed by individual egoists, based on prospects for employment promotion or income generation at the completion of a learning program, threaten the idea of education as a means of promoting intellectual growth, critical awareness and participatory, democratic citizenship (Roberts, 1999b).

Neo-liberalism's construct of lifelong learning, in the perspective of Brown and Tannock (2009), is dehumanizing to the extent that it is based on an economic myopia, concerned solely with the "quantity" rather than "quality" of education that individuals receive. For Hyslop-Marginson and Sears (2006), this form of learning is incompatible with a democratic, liberatory education, in that students are perceived as mere objects being prepared simply to "play out their predetermined role in the burgeoning global economy" (p. 14).

What is extremely important is that we recognize how our opportunities to succeed in life are far more determined by a complex, multilayered interaction between various social, political and subjective forces than by the instrumental skills we gain (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007). This understanding in turn demonstrates how learners, whether disadvantaged or not, do not need hypocrisy, but political skills – skills that enable them to be democratic agents of social change so they learn to question and challenge, as opposed to inadvertently conniving at the existing inequalities produced by the dehumanizing order of the productivist state. Humanizing, political activities can only be truly democratic if they "confront the logic of equality with the logic of the police order" (Biesta, 2011, p. 145), so that the current Third Way discourse is interrupted and reconfigured in the name of "true generosity" (Freire, 1996, p. 27).

If the task of discourse reconstruction is to be initiated at all, I propose that we endorse Freire's (1974, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2004) perception of learning as a lifelong journey for ethical and political humanization. A humanizing construct of lifelong learning engages learners in continual intellectual, emotional, democratic and social development by inviting them to practise praxis – critical reflection and political action – to demythicize oppressive ideologies so as to reinvent social reality and move towards increasing equality and equity. Grounded in commitment to critical democracy, social equality and ethical-political responsibility, the Freirean framework of lifelong learning is not at all idealistic; rather, it is a concretely feasible and a superior alternative to the contemporary neo-liberal model. Further discussion of Freire's leading educational ideas will be found in Chapter 10.

Chapter Nine:
MERITOCRATIC-BASED EDUCATION AND THE HARMONIZED
COMMUNITY

This chapter will articulate the examination of the state's educational policies in relation to two primary themes: first, a competitive, meritocratic, differentiated-based education system; and second, a harmonized community, egoistic responsibility and depoliticized citizenship. With regard to the first, the problematization will be applied to the state's meritocratic ideology of human talents in terms of the way it perpetuates discriminatory educational opportunities and social immobility. A meritocratic-based education, coupled with its differentiating logic, will be argued to be an unfit model for an authentic knowledge-based education that is preconditioned by the quality of social capital. Underpinned by meritocratic competition, neo-liberal education that seeks to efficientize social progress not only distorts the nature of critical learning, but also the role of citizens in a democratic society. Concern with the economic efficiency of education in turn reduces the learning of global/national citizenship to a single instrumental aspect, with the economic aim of enhancing national power (Zemach-Bersin, 2007).

The task of the second theme, then, is to investigate how a narrow, apolitical view of citizenry is reinforced by the Third Way government, through its policy promotion of "communal gentility" (Fitzsimons, 2006, p. 161) grounded in a "voluntary social welfare and service" disposition. The neo-liberal belief by which the ethical project of democratic justice can be autonomously advanced by a benevolent community, and our knowledge about, and empathy towards other community members, fails to see how our responsibility for Others does not require any shared understanding or common ground (Biesta, 2004c; Todd, 2004). A project of democratic justice, instead, requires first and foremost a big

government to shoulder its unconditional political obligations to and for its citizens (Rose, 1999), and a shifting conceptualization of social togetherness from the modality of “being-with” to “being-for” (Bauman, 1995; Levinas, 1998b; Todd, 2004), so that our moral responsibility will no longer be exteriorly imposed from “above”, or motivated by self-interest, but internally demanded by our commitment for, and passion about an “ignorant democracy” (Biesta, 2011). Underpinned by participatory practice, ignorant democracy that understands the impossibility of knowing about Others and pre-determining political processes will necessarily repoliticize the citizenship by engaging each in the public sphere to remake their society as one with a justice that is both now and yet to come.

A Competitive, Meritocratic, Differentiated-Based Education System

Rooted in the neo-liberal belief of possessive individualism, each student in an education system operated in accordance with the principle of meritocracy is to advance and earn rewards in direct proportion to personal merit factors of ability and effort (Andersen & Hjort-Madsen, n.d.). While seemingly fair on the surface, the way that social opportunity and outcome are structured by non-merit factors, including economic inheritance, family background, and societal value is largely ignored (“Topic review”, 2008). What such neglect demonstrates is that meritocracy, as a rival social system, is concerned much more with social efficiency than social equality (“Topic review”, 2008; Huang, 1999; Yang, 1994; Young, 1958). A recent commentary on meritocracy (“Topic review”, 2008) argues that so long as parents are able to effectively advance their children’s futures through economic investment, the result of a meritocratic-based education will persist in being the (re)production of a highly stratified society.

Coming to the postmodern era, the meritocratic ideology is further intensified by Third Way politicians, through their transplantation of business enterprises' *differentiating* logic²² to the national education system (Brown & Tannock, 2009). According to Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001), the entailment of differentiation encompasses "assessing the performance and potential of your people and then giving them the commensurate promotion, compensation, and development opportunities" (p. 126). The underlying assumption is that the most talented employees must be distinguished at an early stage so they can be looked after, given their contribution provides extra value and competitive advantage to the company (Brown & Tannock, 2009). This view is explicitly acknowledged by many leading businessmen; the vice-president of Google, for example, proclaims that a top performing engineer is "300 times or more [valuable] than the average" (cited in Wooldridge, 2006, p. 12); the CEO of Cisco, likewise, asserts that "a world-class engineer with five peers can out-produce 200 regular engineers" (cited in Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001, p. 3); and Bill Gates is convinced that "if it weren't for 20 key people, Microsoft wouldn't be the company it is today" (cited in Wooldridge, 2006, p. 12).

As talent has become "the new oil" (Heidrick & Struggles, 2010, p. 2), the most valuable resource in human capital, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education has sequentially implemented the policies of *Taiwan Innovation, Global Strategy: Cultivating New Citizens with Full Individual Potential* (2006a), *Establishing Teacher Cultivation Performance Evaluation and Exit Mechanism to Enforce the Policy of Preserving the Superior and*

²² Effective school reform or school-based performance management is permeated by this differentiating logic, evident in the chain of cause and effect: a school's overall performance is dependent on its top students' performance in terms of their examination scores and certifying qualification acquirement, so higher (performance) pay is distributed to these students' teachers as a reward.

Weeding out the Inferior (2006g), *Regulations Governing Academic Advancement Incentives for Students Who Compete and Perform Well in International Mathematics or Science Olympiads and International Science Fairs* (2007e), *Program to Nurture Leaders from Among Senior High School Students* (2009a), *Cultivation of Science Talents – Recruitment for First Senior High Science Stream* (2009b), and *The MOE Provides Senior High and Vocational School Students with Funds to Help Them Become Globally Competitive* (2009c) to identify and utilize the best local talent. These policies, as this section will argue, not only perpetuate discrimination in educational opportunities, and social immobility, but also promote the undesirable political ideologies of reactionary fatalism and apolitical citizenship.

According to the *Program to Nurture Leaders from Among Senior High School Students* (MOE, 2009a), qualified participants are the ones with “leadership potential and multiple talents” (p. 1), and the selection will be based on the records of the National Student Learning Achievement Database Management System and school recommendation. Such an approach confirms Treanor’s (n.d.) claim about equal opportunity in a meritocratic-oriented educational discourse simply meaning “equal access to a selective education system” (p. 1). With students divided into basic, intermediate and advanced classes, students whose performance is ranked within the top third of the basic class will be eligible to attend the intermediate class, and the same rule is applied for intermediate student admission to the advanced class. In this Darwinist system, whether or not a student will reach the advanced class is dependent on his/her problem-solving performance. Students are explicitly encouraged to compete with each other for victory – the victory of being crowned “future leader”[of Taiwan]” (MOE, 2009a, p. 1) as well as receiving a differentiated education. The ones that rise to the top are perceived to be the brightest, the most capable, who then must be given exclusive care (Brown & Tannock, 2009). As the Ministry of Education (2009a) states:

“Leaders cannot be nurtured through standard educational curricula or logical, empirical planning....[thus] courses and activities not usually available in schools are made available to...[explore] new educational possibilities for the country’s future leaders” (p. 1).

Such an assertion is striking in that the centre seems to acknowledge the deficiency of standardized teaching and learning, yet still sanctions its use for the remaining students. The implication is that only the “top performers” whose future occupation is yet too early for the government to pin down deserve a better-designed, more contextualized education, whereas the rest can be unproblematically disadvantaged and left to fall behind. This grossly binary construct informed by meritocratic ideology ignores how capability is stretchable rather than fixed (Gilbert, 2005), so that alternative educational possibilities for the have-nots are dogmatically refuted and sabotaged. I am therefore skeptical towards the claim of the Ministry of Education (2009a) that students in the leadership programme will develop a sense of camaraderie through “learning how to help each other and the needy, share, and work together” (p. 2). A recent discussion of meritocracy (“Topic review”, 2008) insists there is no such possibility; it argues that those who reach the top after violent competition are more likely to be “self-assured in their own sense of inherent superiority...[and] smugly justified in their subjugation of the masses” (p. 98), than attentive to the needs and vulnerabilities of those they defeat.

What seems to me extremely important here is a need to challenge the “winner-takes-all” (Frank & Cook, 1995) education supported by the state’s meritocratic ideology of human talent. The central paradox of talent is that it has no agreed or unambiguous definition: business elites tend to define talent as something that “You simply know...when you see it” (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001, p. xii); Britain’s Highly Skilled Migrant Programme defines talent on the basis of people’s “past earnings history” (Brown &

Tannock, 2009, p. 387); and politicians are inclined to define it in terms of the national needs and interests (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). What this variation shows is the way talent provides a very dubious basis for education policy, with government officials recruiting and promoting students through a system that is fundamentally self-interested and unfair (Brown & Tannock, 2009). Indeed, besides a superior education for those with leadership talent, those with talent in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and science are also nurtured with opportunities for assured university entrance, overseas education and future employment (MOE, 2007e, 2009b). These rewarding policies neglect not only the fact that a competitive social structure advantages mostly those from affluent families, but also other equally important competences brought by the uniqueness of individual students (Brown & Tannock, 2009; Gilbert, 2005). The Taiwanese people ought not to accept an education system that sorts and compensates students according to their existing talents. We must be clear-minded about the importance of education lying in its democratic, ethical commitment to protect human pluralism and difference, so that all students are ensured of an equal opportunity to succeed in the future (Gilbert, 2005; Olssen, 2010). This in turn requires us to treat all students as future leaders of Taiwan, so that all their distinct capabilities are acknowledged as significant and indispensable.

By turning back to the aforementioned leadership programme (MOE, 2009a), I contend that such a programme, which measures students' problem-solving ability on the basis of their competence in formalized reasoning (or technical criticality) promotes a fatalistic position and reactionary actions. Formalized reasoning, as Brookfield (2005) argues, is a "means-end thinking" (p. 71) aiming to achieve short-term economic objectives with the maximum possible effectiveness. Such a business-oriented form of reasoning is also entrenched in the learning of the Taiwanese APEC Youth Group. Selected by the Chinese Taipei APEC Study Center (CTASC, 2011), student members are expected to promote trade liberalization and

support sustainable economic development by applying their technical criticality to solve business issues between the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world. From the Freirean (1998c, 2004) perspective, this form of critical thinking that disregards the historical context of social experiences follows neo-liberalism's mechanistic epistemology and encourages students to consider problems from a rather limited viewpoint.

For Freire (1998c, 2004), critical thinking ought to be premised on the epistemology of dialectical totality, for society is constituted not by a single economic element, but various elements whose dynamic, multi-layered interaction results in ceaseless change. If a social system is characterized by being non-linear, non-static and unpredictable, it would make more sense for education to develop students' foundational rationality (as opposed to technical rationality) and problem-posing ability (instead of mere problem-solving ability wherein questions are imposed on students), so they learn to generate their *own* questions to probe, "to find something that is *not* already there, to discover relationships and possibilities that are not given" (Bowker, 2010, p. 129). Such critical enquiry learning contrasts with the one we currently confront in that it recognizes objects are not *just as they are*, but shaped by various forces, and acknowledges the central role of questions and uncertainty in the act of knowing. Students then are encouraged to do and think the impossible because, in the words of Derrida, "if only the possible happened, nothing more would happen" (cited in Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 24). In other words, it is by inviting *all* class members to critically imagine the future, through interaction and communication with each other, with their concrete social-historical *contexts*, and with *multiple* perspectives, that we can move beyond neo-liberalism's reactionary fatalism and bring democratic revolution to society.

Similar to the *Program to Nurture Leaders from Among Senior High School Students* (MOE, 2009a), the policies of *Taiwan Innovation, Global Strategy: Cultivating New Citizens with*

Full Individual Potential (2006a), *Establishing Teacher Cultivation Performance Evaluation and Exit Mechanism to Enforce the Policy of Preserving the Superior and Weeding out the Inferior* (2006g), and *The MOE Provides Senior High and Vocational School Students with Funds to Help Them Become Globally Competitive* (2009c) also provide differential education treatment of the so-called “talented”, although in these cases it concerns meritocratic opportunity to study overseas. Prior to exploring the implications of these three policies, I shall firstly point out their transgression of the democratic principle of *transparency*, allowing the possibility of covert selection. These documents announce that teachers and students who are “doing well” in their areas of profession and study will be selected to participate in the “Elite Foreign Study Project” (1,000 student quota), the “Intensive Overseas English Training” (20 teacher quota), and the “Skill-Obtaining Study Abroad Scheme” (no quota provided) in the United States, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Nonetheless, the important questions of why these programmes are implemented at the outset, and what the selection process entails, including who the selectors are, what powers they have, the criteria²³ used, and how are they used, are left unmentioned.

Due to the Ministry of Education’s unsystematic, casual approach to producing policy documents, the motives behind these programmes are found elsewhere in the documents *E-Generation Manpower Cultivation Plan* (2005b) and *Towards a Learning Society – Part Three* (2006d). The motives explicated in the respective documents are synthesized as follows:

Encouraging overseas studies is advised for enhancing the quality of the nation’s *highly educated*, thus the government will be offering subsidies to prompt potential [teachers and] students...to help these [teachers and] students become the leading

²³ “Doing well” is a rather vague signal, for it can be either very objective or subjective.

elite[s] of their professional areas (MOE, 2005b, p. 3). [In the meantime, they are expected to] abstract the refinement from other nations and observe the world in a different angle to improve our [Taiwan's] ability to *compete* with others...In so doing, we [the Taiwanese people] will not just confine ourselves in a limited circle, just like a frog in the well (MOE, 2006d, p. 21).

The specific reference to the “elite” makes it clear that this is the only classification available, and it will be granted to some, but not to Others. Those defined as the “highly educated” (meaning high performers) are believed to contribute to the nation’s economic success, and hence legitimately rewarded with the privilege of mobility and the opportunity to acquire international insights and cross-cultural understanding. The Ministry of Education, convinced that “only the individual with global vision can be the master of a new century” (MOE, 2006c, p. 6), excludes the non-elite others who do not have the economic support and socio-political freedom to take advantage of international travel. Devaluing everything other than “top” performance, such a hegemonic development model of the competition state is antagonistic towards communitarian democracy committed to safeguarding social solidarity (Brown & Tannock, 2009).

For the OECD (2000), any society with limited social cohesion is incapable of constructing a successful knowledge-based economy, in that the quality of produced knowledge is now dependent on the quality of human relationships and interaction. This is to say that if the central government hopes for a sustainable economic development, intellectual capital must be secured through the reinforcement of social solidarity, rather than the competitive meritocracy that (re)polarizes the society. This then requires not only the policy makers, but the society as a whole to contemplate and deliberate the ways in which education can

best be designed to enhance social capital, that is, through trust, caring, respect, camaraderie, cooperation and collegiality.

While the Ministry of Education (2009b) repetitively asserts that the state's competitiveness in a globalized, knowledge economy ultimately relies on "the cultivation [and utilization] of talents in various fields" (p. 1), there is neither a definition of what knowledge economy really means, nor is there one single critical question posed about globalization. This striking omission neglects the fundamental epistemological questions, and thereby the role of knowledge in the development of global/national citizenship remains obscure (Roberts, 2009). For the centre, the cultivation of cross-culturally competent and globally literate citizens is necessary to secure the state's political stability and economic vitality (MOE, 2005b, 2006d). The expectation that study abroad teachers and students will assume the identities of "voracious learners, cultural sponges and unassuming ambassadors" (Zemach-Bersin, 2007, p. 24) to create goodwill for Taiwan around the world, and absorb the resource of international knowledge (knowledge as a form of power) to benefit the state, demonstrates how global citizens, while seemingly universal on the surface, are narrowly grounded in a sense of patriotic nationalism (Roberts, 2009).

In the Ministry of Education's (2006a) document *Taiwan Innovation, Global Strategy: Cultivating New Citizens With Full Individual Potential*, study abroad teachers and students are reminded how their "global stage is extended from their Taiwanese foothold" (p. 9), and thus national objectives must be incorporated during their pursuit of personal success and happiness. What this implies is that global/national citizenship is not valued in its own right, but for its instrumentality in advancing national power. Biesta and Lawy (2006) argue that such an economic reductionist view of citizenry ignores how the development of the global/national citizen is an inherently educative, humanizing process that goes well beyond

people's effective economic production or acquisition of some pre-specified values. Insisting citizenship is neither a status nor an identity to be owned, achieved or maintained, Biesta and Lawy (2006) suggest it would be better to conceive of citizenship as “participatory practice” – practice that engages each one of us, through continual critical enquiry and mature judgment, in the search for alternative social and economic possibilities; only then can we move beyond a world dominated by neo-liberalism's economic reductionism and “hyper-meritocracy” (Brown & Tannock, 2009, p. 384).

A Harmonized Community, Egoistic Responsibility and Depoliticized Citizenship

In fact, the approach to depoliticizing global/national citizenship is not unfamiliar to, nor distant from, that of a neo-liberal state. Disfavoring political activism and social transformation, early neo-liberalism's (Thatcherism's Second Way) projection of “active citizenship” has already sought to shape the individual citizen into an independent “enterprising and competitive entrepreneur” (Olssen, 1996, p. 340). While adhering to this narrow, apolitical view of citizenry, the Third Way rationalizes further about the importance of individuals possessing “a sense of civic virtue and pride in both country and local community” (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 68) – community that is characterized by sameness, rational agreement and unity. Osborne (2004) argues that this view on community creates an illusion of social wholeness (symbolic collectivism), which in turn helps a neo-liberal state to reduce the good citizen to “the good person, the man or woman who helps others, respects other people's rights, obeys the law, is suitably patriotic and the like” (p. 13).

Consequently, a disposition towards “voluntary social welfare and service” is promoted by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, through the policies of *Digital Opportunity, A Dream Come True* (MOE, 2007f), *School Education Special Savings Account Program* (2009d), *Night Angel Illumination Program* (MOE, 2009e), and *Active Voluntary Service*

Organization Learning (MOE, 2009f). Hoping that the promotion of communal gentility will allow the ethical project of justice to be autonomously advanced, the individual citizen is enlisted by the central government not in political actions to rectify the structural causes of neo-liberalism's victimization, but in the support of its reactionary position by sympathizing with its most visible victims and helping to temporarily alleviate its abuses (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Fitzsimons, 2006; Freire, 1996; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Lankshear, 1993; Osborne, 2004). Accordingly, this section and the one that follows will demonstrate how the centre's promotion of civic morals is incapable of realizing morality and democratic justice, for it sanctions the perpetuation of a minimal government, the misconception of community (as a particular form of social togetherness) and the distortion of moral responsibility (the nature of moral acts). I therefore argue in the end that a shifting conceptualization of community and responsibility, along with the re-politicization of citizenship, will be necessary.

In the policies mentioned in the previous paragraph, community is being presented as a unified, reconciled socio-political entity in which all have something in common and want to contribute something for the good of society. Thus, under the name of "moral integrity" (MOE, 2009a, p. 1), families, schools, social organizations and business enterprises are encouraged to donate money, resources and time to address the problem that "not all children are born with equal educational opportunities" (MOE, 2009d, p. 1), so the financially and regionally disadvantaged can enjoy the same digital learning environment as the advantaged, continue their formal education and receive after-class (remedial) courses. On the surface, this rationalization of community that promotes social and moral responsibility seems to be praiseworthy, yet it masks the neo-liberal governmentality which seeks to constitute the individual citizen into a particular community subject with specific subjectivities (Biesta, 2011; Fitzsimons, 2006).

From the *School Education Special Savings Account Program* (MOE, 2009d), we can see how the desirable community subject in Taiwan is one who is committed to the centre's policies by showing his/her love, compassion, and philanthropy, as well as willingness to shoulder burdens to "create a brighter future for children" (p. 1). Such an emphasis on communal affection, charity and voluntarism is termed by Rose (1999) as "etho-politics": politics fundamentally shaped by neo-liberalism's belief in welfare independency and minimal government. Based on such an underpinning, we may assume that community in an etho-political discourse is only valuable to the extent that it is able to effect a kind of moral rearmament to counter the existing social injustice. In other words, it is by advocating communal gentility that the responsibility for citizens' well-being is shifted from the central government to the "virtuous community". While this shift of political duty is already troubling, the egotistic form of civic responsibility elicited by the Third Way community further thrusts Taiwanese society into a disturbing state. This point will be explicated with a specific focus on corporate philanthropy.

In the document *Digital Opportunity, A Dream Come True* (MOE, 2007f), corporate enterprises such as Chunghwa Telecom, Microsoft Taiwan, HP Taiwan and IBM Taiwan are publicly extolled by the Ministry of Education for their donation of products (software and hardware) and provision of discounted services (online learning resources) to the Digital Opportunity Centers (DOCs) in remote areas. Helping to achieve national goals of narrowing the digital divide and providing lifelong learning for all, corporate philanthropy or corporate social responsibility (CSR) is portrayed as essentially altruistic, something explicitly good for society. Such an assumption is, however, rejected by Carr (2009) in that he perceives companies, under the guise of admirable corporate philanthropy, as providing "an easy and cheaper way of marketing their company and the products" (p. 6). In

agreement, Kolb (2008) argues further that CSR should be understood as *strategic* philanthropy or community *investment*, linking a company's charitable endeavours directly to its business goals. Grounded in self-interest, CSR encourages companies to practise *targeted charity*²⁴ by investing in communities where they operate in exchange for expected benefits, such as improving their image and reputation, engendering greater loyalty from the community, and stimulating purchases (Kolb, 2008).

From the perspective of Confucius, this egotistic form of responsibility, concerned with the correlation between a generous public image and the possible gains, is essentially irresponsible, given the intrinsic demand of morality is neglected (Chan, 2002). For Confucius, if moral actions are to be genuine, they must be led from the "inside" and be free from coercion, so that agents are not only voluntarily motivated by the pureness of morality, but also capable of sensitively attending to ethical contingencies. Agreeing with Confucius' conception of moral responsibility, I shall argue here that the outcome of the *Active Voluntary Service Organization Learning* policy (MOE, 2009f) which is used as a criterion for educational institutions' upcoming subsidies and credits earned by tertiary students, cannot "strengthen their civil responsibility" (p. 1) as the state proclaims. This is because real responsibility, as both Confucius and Levinas would claim, lies in our respond-ability to the authentic needs of Others with an expectation of *nothing* in return.

Diverging from Confucian and Levinasian responsibility, the form of ethicality promoted in the policy *Night Angel Illumination Program* (MOE, 2009e) not only overlooks the contingent conditions, but also sabotages the unique and unknowable distinctness of the

²⁴ Corporate business' targeted charity is in consistent with the operating logic of a social investment state: it perceives charity programs ought to be "selective, aiming at the targeted groups" (CEPD, 2007b, p. 31) and defensible only if they can increase the firm's economic productivity.

Other. This can be seen, for example, from the policy's pre-regulated relationship between community subjects' responsibility (retired teachers and college education majors should devote themselves to conducting supplementary courses), and underprivileged children's improved learning outcomes (MOE, 2009e). What this suggests is that the alterity of the underprivileged children is reduced by the centre to the realm of the same, so their needs are viewed as nothing more than performance enhancement.

This assimilation of difference can also be identified in *Towards a Learning Society – Part Three* (MOE, 2006d) in relation to lifelong learning opportunities for minority groups.

According to this document, these groups will be firstly “studied” by relevant institutions in order to identify their learning “needs”. This implies that the specific things these minority groups will learn are needed and decided not by themselves, but by government officials.

Derrida (1992) argues that responding to Others on the basis of knowledge reduces ethics to a mere technique and manifests the exact opposite of responsibility. As Derrida (1992) explicates:

When the path is clear and given, when a certain *knowledge* opens up the way in advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said that there is none to make; irresponsibly, and in good conscience, one simply applies or implements a program...It makes of action the applied consequence, the simple application of a knowledge or know-how. It makes of ethics and politics a technology. No longer of the order of practical reason or decision, it begins to be *irresponsible* (pp. 41, 45).

Towards a Contested Community, Altruistic Responsibility and Repoliticized Citizenship

The neo-liberal belief in which our knowledge about Others, through comprehension or

empathy (as an act of fellow-feeling), is important for democratic justice fails to understand how our responsibility for Others is not based on our shared understanding or common ground (Biesta, 2004c; Todd, 2004). If that is so, those we have difficulty relating to, or have nothing in common with, would appear to be a problem, something that needs to be overcome, either through “making the stranger similar to us or by making the stranger, or the strangeness of the stranger, invisible” (Biesta, 2004c, p. 313). Such a way of relating for Bauman (1995) is a mode of *being-with*; a rule-governed togetherness that not only risks engulfing the very alterity, but also immobilizes transformative actions at the level of the self and the community.

Bauman (1995) explains that a rule-governed togetherness can only allow encounters that are conventional, in which “conventions substitute concern with the rule for the concern for the partner of encounter” (p. 56). As a consequence, the self that engages in safe and normative ways forecloses the possibilities he/she may open up for the future where justice has infinite promises (Todd, 2004). Todd (2004) argues that insofar as community has potential for social transformation, it obviously does not rest in the Third Way’s being-with modality. What is needed, then, is that we recognize how our responsibility does not presuppose any commonality, but a fundamental recognition of “the other is not-me” (p. 341). Equally needed is an alternative conceptualization of community that will lead us to break through the space of convention and transcend the limitations of time and place.

For Bauman (1995) and Levinas (1998b), community is not a pre-existing socio-political entity with fixed properties, but something that emerges only from a signifying encounter with the Other’s unknowable uniqueness. Founded on singularity and difference, this community only comes forth when each communal member responds and takes responsibility for the Other in a way that is individualized and unprecedented. Biesta (2004c)

terms such a community “the community of strangers” or “the community without community” (p. 318), in which its *being-for* (being responsible for Others) modality invokes ethical commitment: each member attends to *others as Others* by seriously taking the burden of justice: justice through making evaluations, comparisons, judgments and decisions, rather than limitedly engaging in a rule-circumscribed space or docilely conforming to the policies of the state.

This view of community stands in sharp contrast to the neo-liberal notion of community, for it is always becoming, dependent on the changing quality of human relationality and the changing structure of society (Todd, 2004). In the community of those who have nothing in common, the ethical relationship that one has with Others is fundamental. To be a community subject does not mean to perform a set of pre-regulated philanthropic behaviours, but to be subject to the demand of Others (Strhan, 2007). This subjection, for Levinas (1998a), is something that the self cannot escape, something that makes the self free from egoism to be altered by Others in a relation of boundless obligation. It is through welcoming, approaching and responding to Others and their otherness that the self also simultaneously undergoes what Biesta (2003, 2009a) terms as “subjectification,” in which the self confirms his/her distinctiveness as irreducible and irreplaceable.

Because singularity and difference are the central features of this new community, the roles of ignorance and sensitivity are not unwanted, but essential to the contingent ethical circumstances. Confucius endorsed this view, and stated that universal moral principles are often too general, and hence insufficient and insensitive guidance for us when making moral decisions for particular situations (Chan, 2002). Likewise, Bauman (1995), Levinas (2004), Todd (2004) and Strhan (2007) consider that our very encounter with difference is something that cannot be known beforehand, and therefore our responses to Others can

never be specified prior to our meeting with other persons. What is needed in the moment of encounter, then, is my orientation to ignorance, to learn *from* Others: Others who, although distinctively different from who I am, are in all ways equal to me (Gilbert, 2010). This understanding shows how our social and moral responsibility do not require knowledge or empathy, but sensitivity, reflectivity and criticality in “going beyond the straight line of the law, that is, of finding a place lying beyond the universal” (Levinas, 2004, p. 245), so that the infinite possibilities of justice can be ushered into society.

A renewed concept of community would necessarily require a rethinking of citizenship that is no longer based on the state’s definition of what a good citizen is. Rather than viewing communal subjectivities and identities as ones that can or must be fully developed before democratic justice can take place/be ushered in, it is better that we understand the democratic subject to be the one who is *essence-less* and “ignorant of a particular definition of what he or she is supposed to be as a ‘good citizen’” (Biesta, 2011, p. 152). The ignorant citizen is the one who refuses to be domesticated by this official knowledge, or to be rigidly confined in a pre-determined civic identity. Appropriate kinds of communal subjectivity that we may want to devote to citizens are *considerable commitment* to, and *endless passion* about the ethical, political project of justice (Biesta, 2011). This in turn shows that the fundamental task of democratic politics is to “mobile [*sic*] those passions towards democratic designs” rather than to “eliminate passions from the sphere of the *public*, in order to render a rational consensus possible” (Mouffe, 2000, cited in Biesta, 2011, p. 151). Indeed, the public space is indispensable within this “ignorant” discourse of democracy, for it is in this very public engagement, where each is driven by a desire for a better mode of human togetherness, that his/her citizenship is *repoliticized*, through his/her ongoing engagement with the experiment of democracy. It is also through this very political engagement that each is being subjectified and coming into presence as a unique,

irreplaceable individual subject, so that democratic citizenship is no longer something to be “imposed” or “learned” (if it can be learned at all), but practised and transformed as the experiments proceed.

Chapter Ten:

(RE)VISITING AUTONOMY AND FREIRE FOR A LIBERATING EDUCATION

As argued in Chapter 2, the Taiwanese government's imposition of universal autonomy on education disregards the fundamental socio-cultural differences between the East and the West. The government's promotion of the *independent self* (atomistic individualism), with capacity for rational will and reasoning, forgets how such a universal attribute is already a product of a particular cultural aspiration and translation. This very universality, Butler (2000) reminds us, "cannot rest easily within the notion of a single 'culture'" (p. 24), or it can simply turn into "a colonial and expansionist" hegemony (p. 25). The assertion of universality is thus necessarily a field of *contesting norms*, bounded by culture and dependent on the specific local contexts in which they (re)interpret and infuse new meaning (Littlewood, 1996, 1999). With that said, the Taiwanese people need not accept a pre-defined autonomy which directs us how to live, to relate, to teach and to learn in order to fulfill it.

Instead, we should make our own sense of autonomy and explore how education can be practised *through* this concept to support the furtherance of our conventional collectivism. In this chapter, a new heteronomous-autonomy-based education that departs from Freire's epistemological and pedagogical approaches will be proposed for the embodiment of a true liberating and humanizing education. Such a proposal may or may not be agreed to by all, and this is why further revision and articulation is more than important for the project of democratic education. The purpose of democratic teaching and learning, Todd (2010) claims, lies in "educating for living in a dissonant world", a world that is necessarily "without a theme song" (p. 227). Accordingly, the song that I am about to sing is not one to be followed unquestioningly, but one that requires the Taiwanese people to interpret carefully and respond responsibly.

Replacing Universe, Universality and Autonomy with Pluriverse, Diversality, and Heteronomous Autonomy

To be clear, my opposition to autonomy is not based on whether it is an appropriate ideal for the state's education system, but on the centre's uncritical transplantation, in which the society's collectivist tradition is replaced by, rather than carefully negotiated with, the idea of autonomy. The state's "self-westernizing", de-pluralistic approach is essentially undemocratic in that it denies and erases the historical mode of existence practised by the Taiwanese people. A democracy, Mouffe (2005) explains, is one that recognizes the universe as a "pluriverse" (p. 87) in which human plurality is understood as the precondition of co-existence, and in which assumptions, concepts, theories and principles can be and should be debated, contested and transformed. Mouffe (2005) is adamant that without *agonism*, there can be no democratic possibility because the very functioning of democracy itself is based on differing and contesting worldviews. Similar to Mouffe's (2005) notion of "pluriverse", Mignolo (2000) proposes that we should rethink universality as "diversality" – a process of cultural negotiation and translation – that no longer promises "guidance to the wayward human world below" (Honig, 2006, p. 102), but a more ethical encounter with human difference. From this viewpoint, any universal claim is rejected as all claims should and need to be open to a transformative, political process through which it is reshaped and reinvented by the multi-polar perspectives provided (Todd, 2010). It is, to put it differently, through our *intelligibility* and *communicability* of things that we compare, evaluate, translate, and decide our own universals (Freire, 1997). It is this ongoing series of struggle of ours, according to Todd (2010, 2011), that is precisely what kept democracy alive in a state that is both now and yet becoming.

Thus, I argue here that the concept of autonomy that will best suit the Taiwanese educational context is one that is grounded neither in liberal humanism²⁵, nor neo-liberalism, but in Ryan's (1991) "autonomous interdependence" (p. 227). Based on a collective structure, autonomous interdependence recognizes "independent (critical) thinking", "question raising", "mature judgment" and "responsibility" as crucial for individuals to function well in a democratic polity. Equally recognized is the importance of "relatedness", that is, one's intrinsic support for and cooperation and collaboration with others (Ryan, 1991). In this model, the aim is to develop the *interdependent self*, or what we might want to refer as *heteronomous autonomy*: a person whose thoughts and actions are socially determined, and who, paradoxically, is independent because he/she communicates *autonomously*.

In other words, heteronomous autonomy enables the emergence of one's independence, through his/her respectful interaction and dialogical communication with, not competition against, others. Student autonomy, as Little (1994) asserts, is "the product of interdependence rather than independence" (p. 75). This is to say that we need not view heteronomy (social determinism) as antithetic to autonomy (the independence of the individual). Mackenzie's (2006) explication deserves to be quoted fully here:

there is no contradiction between the independence which is now claimed for the individual[,] and the fact of his[/her] social determination... becomes evident when we consider the nature of that determination and of that independence. That the individual is determined by his[/her]society, means merely that his[/her] life is an expression of the general spirit of the social atmosphere in which he[she] lives. And

²⁵ Liberal humanism is sometimes referred to by Freire as "liberal humanitarianism" and "liberal authoritarianism". By stating this, it is important that we do not confuse liberal humanism with radical humanism, a "genuine" type of humanism talked and practised by Freire (1996, 1998a, 1998b).

that the individual is independent, means merely that the spirit which finds expression in him[/her] is a living force that may develop by degrees into something different (cited in Olssen, 2010, p. 205).

My proposition of this particular model of heteronomous autonomy needs to be understood in direct relation to the Taiwanese *culture of silence* which is constructed by four primary socio-cultural factors. In *Defining and Developing Autonomy in East Asian Contexts*, Littlewood (1999) has identified these four factors as: (1) the need to preserve “face”; (2) the concern for correctness; (3) the prioritization of social harmony; and (4) the vertical relationship between teacher and students. With regard to these factors, it is important that we comprehend them not as separated, but dialectically inter-related cultural entities which have profound implications for our understanding of why Taiwanese students would be reluctant to participate in “argumentative” classroom activities, or to voice their personal opinions, express respectful disagreement, or pose questions. Fearing of making mistakes, students’ concern for “correct” performance in what they say and do reinforce classroom quietism, thereby learning is reduced to mere activities of “listening to and obeying the teacher” or “staying mute unless we are asked”.

Within such an educational culture, teachers are regarded as know-it-all authorities who are there to provide all the answers and organize all the learning for students. Underpinned by authoritarian heteronomy, the unchallengeable authority figures of teachers in turn results in students’ overdependency, excessive obedience and uncritical conformity, which not only undermines the development of their unique subjectivity, but also their responsibility for taking charge of “inductive moments” (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 158) during their learning journey. Accordingly, what is needed in the state’s education is a model of autonomy supported by democratic-heteronomy, so that students are enabled to become autonomous

agents who are conditioned by heteronomy in a critically conscious way. This model is certainly not centred around the self, but articulates the self with others; its name is heteronomous autonomy or, alternatively, decentred ²⁶ autonomy.

Heteronomous Autonomy and the Need for an Alternative Epistemological

Conditioning

If the development of students' heteronomous autonomy is to be authentic, epistemology is the first issue we need to deal with. This is because each epistemological choice carries an "action package" that results in certain educational practices and outcomes (Andreotti, 2010). For example, the state's adoption of neo-liberalism's mechanistic epistemology confines education within monological communication, transmission, repetition, memorization and an answer-centred approach, so that it is not "autonomous interdependency", but "heteronomous dependency" that is being developed in students. In the mechanistic worldview, education proceeds in a rigid, *linear* way in which new ideas are not introduced together with changes in structures, but with adaptations in people's cognition. The individual student is thereby shaped into what Fromm (1964) calls "necrophily":

[A necrophilous person] approach[es] life *mechanically*, as if all living persons were *things*...Memory, rather than experience; *having* [more material possessions], rather than *being* [more fully human]...The necrophilous person can relate to an object only if he *possesses* it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses

²⁶ The word decentred here means that the self is mindfully aware of the way his/her thoughts and actions are conditioned, and complemented by those of Others. Hence Others' distinctive subjectivities ought always to be ethically respected by the self, whereas their understandings, although different from the self's own, are all recognized as legitimate, challenging and challengeable knowledge. One's autonomy, as Freire (2004) says, "is only authentic within the actions of subjects who take responsibility for their [ethical] limits" (p. 8).

possession he loses contact with the world...he loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life (p. 41).

A necrophilous population is, unfortunately, being reproduced through the state's postmodern education, as its mechanistic lens misconceives *post*-modernity as *after*, rather than *questioning* (Andreotti, 2010). Postmodern education in Taiwan cannot therefore destabilize, but perpetuate the oppressive structures, ideas and practices informed by modern ways of knowing, thinking, acting and relating. If we are to move beyond modernity's dogmatic rigidity and brutality, Andreotti (2010) argues, the *pedagogy of discomfort* where comfortable, commonsensical knowledge is interrupted and transformed is not merely a necessary, but an urgent task of educators. Such a pedagogy, aiming to realize a more humanized education that is just, responsible and critical, would, I propose, necessarily consider Freire's epistemology of "dialectical totality" and its profound implications for activities in education.

Freire's Dialectical Epistemology: A Theory of Becoming

Positing a dynamic relation between mechanistic objectivism (the world) and solipsistic idealism (consciousness), Freire not only reads reality as dialectical, but reads dialectically about a world of objects which are also dialectical (Roberts, 2000). For Freire (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2004), all aspects of objective reality (which includes both nature and the social world) are in constant motion, which implies the world is evolving rather than fixed in a lock-step mechanism. It implies also that our consciousness, such as ideas, values, beliefs and conceptions, will change as reality shifts from one thing to the next (Roberts, 2000). As Freire makes clear: "It [the world] is always in the process of becoming" (1998a, p. 72), and "[w]orld and conscience take place simultaneously. Conscience of the world engenders conscience of the self, and of others in the world, and with the world" (2004, p. 73).

This dialectical relationship between consciousness and the world, in the view of Roberts (2000), demonstrates the impossibility of comprehending each without resorting to the other. Hence, any social problem for Freire would never be broken down and studied in isolation; instead, it would be investigated in direct relation to other aspects of the world, “as part of a *totality* and theorized in global terms” (Roberts, 2000, p. 36). Viewing the world as a complex system constituted by various elements and their ongoing, multilayered interaction, we may assert that Freirean education adopts a theory of *becoming*, based on an idea not of perpetual (cognitive) adaptation, but of *ceaseless change* in which nothing is pre-determined as everything is historical and transformed by human intentionality: “the subjectivity with which I dialectically relate to the world...registers events not so as to adapt myself to them but so as to change them” (Freire, 1998a, pp. 72-73).

Education as the Social Practice of Freedom

Freire’s (1998b) epistemology regarding knowing “is a social process...equally involving other thinking subjects” (p. 92), and so, first and foremost, it challenges the Cartesian and Kantian self-enclosed, all-knowing subject whose thinking is prior to his/her encounter with others and with the world, and whose freedom to reason and cognition is not only limitless, but inviolable. Freire is adamant that for humans, as relational beings – beings whose consciousness is always socially, culturally and politically conditioned, and whose very existence cannot be apprehended without referring to others – it is neither possible to *be*, nor do things “alone” (Roberts, 2000). Consequently, any resort to *I* think or individualistic conception of autonomy would not make sense to Freire’s (1998a, 1998b) position of *We* think (decentred self or interdependent self) and his conception of *relative autonomy* or what I term heteronomous autonomy. The words decentred and relative imply that education is situated in the ethical self-other relationship, therefore the responsibility one has is not

merely to himself/herself, but to and for Others. These words also imply that one's freedom necessarily has "ethical limits" (Freire, 1998b, p. 66), meaning that my freedom to conceive and act can only attain legitimacy if Others' freedom is observed and their otherness respected.

Freire's (1976, 1998a, 1998b) view on freedom is compatible with that of Arendt (1977), who claims that freedom only exists "under the condition of non-sovereignty" (p. 164) in which "its field of experience is action" (p. 146), that is, certain social practices. Thus, freedom for Arendt (1977) and Freire (1976, 1998a, 1998b) is never associated with individuals' inner feelings or private experiences, but with collective acts in the public space. "Man would know nothing of inner freedom", Arendt (1977) stresses, "if he had not first experienced a condition of being free as a worldly tangible reality" (p. 148). To be free, then, there is a need for education to provide opportunities for all participants to engage in the particular social practices that will free us from oppressive conditioning – structures, practices and modes of thought – and allow us to "insert ourselves into the human world like [subjects of history and culture who not only undergo, but bring the world] a second birth" (Arendt, 1977, pp. 176-177). These social practices, when translated into Freire's liberating pedagogical principles, are *dialogue*, *praxis* and *conscientization*, which all have specific emphasis on concepts of *relationality*, *contextuality* and *criticality*.

The Departure of Liberating Praxis: Men-Women-in-Context

Conscientization, the theory dimension of praxis which focuses on critical reflection on the *interrelatedness* between concrete specificities within a social totality, has to do with the way knowledge is partially produced by the practice dimension of praxis (Freire, 1998c). In other words, praxis as a synthesis of theory/practice and reflection/action recognizes how our knowledge does not come from a vacuum, but is created from our reflective thoughts on

our experiences of encountering Others and the material world. This is, Freire (1976) claims, a way of knowing that “does not take place in abstract beings in the air but in real men and women and in social structures”(pp. 146-147). This understanding of knowledge has implications for the crucial role of *contextuality* or *situationality* in every educational activity.

As argued earlier in Chapter 6, neo-liberalism’s de-contextualized education, coupled with the use of pre-packaged curricula, reduce the act of knowing to mere acquisition of the existing knowledge, so that students are being shaped into knowledge eaters, rather than knowledge creators. In radical opposition to the standardized, official curricula, Freire (1996) proposed “situated learning”²⁷ – learning that does not start from “what the *educator* thinks best for the *students*” (p. 74), but from students’ concrete context, concerning their prior knowledge, existing cognition and lived experiences. Attending to context specificity means that a course should be invented in-progress, through the collective effort of teacher and students, in which students’ daily life themes serve as the basis of critical inquiry (Freire & Shor, 1987). Designing curricula *with*, rather than *for* students according to their own personal views of reality not only enables learning to be intrinsically motivating, but also

²⁷ Freire’s concept of situated learning might be argued by some as no different from a constructivist approach to student-centred learning. Yet, Gordon (2009) and Roberts (2001, 2003) have reminded us that the latter tends to promote permissive freedom and lapse into a laissez faire approach to pedagogy or a kind of “anything goes” relativist educational discourse that lacks the rigorous structure, authoritative (not authoritarian) direction and purposeful discussion (as opposed to a mere conversational, psychological exchange about individuals’ lived experiences) required by Freire’s liberating education. To put it differently, the sharing of experiences in Freire’s constructivist education must always be followed with social praxis that entails both reflection and (political) action (e.g. dismantling oppressive mode of thoughts, structures and mechanisms). As theory and practice are inextricably intertwined for Freire, Gordon (2009) argues further that such a recognition allows reflection on “how constructivist teaching and learning can inform the theory of constructivism, rather than just dwelling on how the latter impact the former” (p. 41).

allows the gnosiological cycle of knowledge to be protected (Freire, 1996; Freire & Shor, 1987). In this way the existing knowledge of teacher and students, through their rigorous structural/contextual examination, is able to be remade and transformed.

The Process of Liberating Praxis: An Experience of Balanced Growth

In addition to contextuality, Freire's (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2004) theory of knowledge also points to the importance of *sensibility* throughout the educational processes. Teaching and learning, Freire (1970) says, is not reducible to reason or rationality alone, but involves "the whole being of the actors – [their bodies], their emotions, their feelings, their 'language-thought-reflection'" (cited in Roberts, 2000, p. 43). Education, from the Freirean perspective, has everything to do with growing, growing that does not limitedly focus on the technical, scientific and quantitative aspects as practised by neo-liberalism, but encompasses aspects of biology, psychology, history, culture, politics, society, aesthetics and ethics. It is, in other words, growing as a "totality" that allows students to be in the "harmonious growth of being" (Freire, 1998b, p. 95). It is thus an artistic process of formation which Freire and Shor (1987) refer to as "a kind of rebirth" (p. 118) – rebirth which has no endpoint because human subjectivity is always in a state of becoming.

Neo-liberal education, on the contrary, is "a trade for the insensitive, so filled with rationalism that they [teachers and students] become empty of life or feeling" (Freire, 1998b, p. 50). When teachers wash their hands of students' presented (especially negative) emotions during their learning processes, it is conceivable that students may panic, be paralyzed by their fear of failing to comprehend the study at hand, and give up without a fight. It is thus important for teachers to be observant and attentive, open to the affective neediness of students. When necessary, dialogical intervention ought to be introduced to ensure students understand feelings like fear, doubt and insecurity are natural learning occurrences,

something they ought not to surrender themselves to, but learn to negotiate with. This, of course, is not to say that the positive feelings of students need no constraints: teachers ought to interrupt student when they show excessive self-affirmation, feeling so full of their own truth that they forget what it means to be humble in Freire's (1998b) sense of "uncertain certainty" (p. 39). Education, in sum, should be relevant not merely to students' careerism, but to every domain of their life – epistemologically, intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially speaking. While the aspect of developing the whole person may be overlapped with a humanistic approach to education, a Freirean approach would necessarily open up dialogical spaces for a pedagogy of questioning, wherein students are afforded opportunities to engage with difficult knowledges and to respond in their unique, individualized way.

The Pedagogy of Liberating Praxis: Not Answers from Above, but Questions from Below

As a student who received most of her education in Taiwan, I understand that asking teachers to be sensitively attentive is almost a challenge to their ascribed authority. What needs to be changed is a shift of teacher-student relationship from the hierarchical to the horizontal – "'teacher-students' with 'students-teachers'" (Freire, 1996, p. 61) – so that the teacher is no longer perceived as "the one who teaches, but one who is himself[/herself] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (p. 61). According to Freire (1996), this resolution of the contradiction between teacher and students is necessarily the first task of educators who are committed to a *pedagogy of question*, rather than a *pedagogy of answer*. An answer-centred education based on a monological teacher-student relationship is fundamentally anti-dialogical and thus oppressive: it treats students as "adaptable, manageable beings" (p. 54) or, even better, "acquiescent automatons" (Roberts, 2000, p. 54) whose thoughts and actions must be controlled so as to secure an "unchangeable" social reality in which "everything 'is what it is' and nothing more

or less” (Bowker, 2010, p. 128). It is by treating students as the receiving end of the teacher’s answers that the relationship and knowledge of the participants, positioned at opposite poles, remain unchanged and unchallenged.

Given that historical educational problems in Taiwan have never been about not having enough answers, but about not having questions, Freire’s (1996) *problem-posing education* that uses students’ questions as stepping-stones for further questions does seem to hold promise. Such an education would also require Taiwanese students to change their perceptions of their responsibility in learning, as well as their understanding of effort in studying. Educational responsibility and effort is not the same as cramming as much given knowledge as possible, nor is it about the numbers of hours spent in the study room. Instead, it is about the quality of intellectual seriousness or the rigour of study discipline, which, according to Mitchell (1999), is concerned primarily with whether or not “the doer [student] has wholeheartedly vanished into the deed [act of study]” (cited in Roberts, 2012, p. 8). This is to say that if we wish our student to be autonomously interdependent, rather than passively dependent on the teachers’ “illumination”, their intense concentration on and full immersion in the texts (the word) and the context (the world) are indispensable preconditions for their autonomous initiation in making (further) inquiries, inductions, interpretations and recreations.

Problem-Posing Education: A Permanent Process of Reality Deconstruction and Reconstruction

Learning in problem-posing education, as the name suggests, takes place through “the *posing of the problems* of human beings in their relations with the world” (Freire, 1996, p. 60), with the aim of developing a more humane world through the act of “gnosiological encircling” (Freire, 1997b, p. 92). In this educative model, knowledge is viewed neither as

fixed nor *absolute*, but necessarily *incomplete* and always *provisional* (Roberts, 2000).

Accordingly, to know is not simply to memorize the profile of the object of study or come to a predetermined conclusion, but to communicate purposefully with Others (with teacher, peers and texts) and reflect critically in order to attain fuller knowledge of the object of study, with the possibility of going beyond our “limit-attitude” (Foucault, 1992, p. 105) and “limit-situations” (Freire, 1996, p. 80). In light of the “gnosiological encircling” (Freire, 1997b, p. 92), knowing is a *permanent* discovery process of *decoding and recoding reality* which requires us to gain a certain kind of (epistemological) distance, yet, paradoxically, moves us closer to an object of study and its every connected relationship:

[W]hat we do when we try to establish a cognitive or epistemological relationship with the object to be known, when we get it into our hands, grasp it, and begin to ask ourselves about it, what we really begin to do is to take it as a *totality*. We then begin to split it into its constituent parts... In a certain moment, even though we may not have exhausted the process of splitting the object, we try to understand it now in its totality. We try to *retotalize* the totality which we split!... The moment of summarizing has to do with this effort of retotalizing of the totality we divided into parts (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 161).

By exploring the interconnectedness and interdependency between the various parts (social, cultural, political and economic factors) of the object under investigation, we are in fact engaging (with our students) in *interdisciplinary* learning wherein not only are our bodies of knowledge *widened*, but our understanding of the object’s *raison d’être* (its reasons for being like it is) is also *deepened*. On the other hand, our alternative rearrangements of the object’s constituent parts during the reality-recoding process afford possible transformative changes for the society in the (immediate) future. Such an education, that liberates

participants through their very act of posing problems, is affirmed by Freire (1996) as a “revolutionary futurity” in that

it affirms men [and women] as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead... for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future (p. 65).

Critical Literacy: A Political Process of Democratic Revolution

Aiming to develop democratic agents of social change, problem-posing education would necessarily focus on the cultivation of students’ critical literacy by promoting their deeper understanding of issues of political, economic and social inequality. Unlike neo-liberal education, which promotes critical literacy on the basis of personal employability and economic instrumentality, critical literacy in Freirean education is a political process of conscientization, emphasizing the use of classroom space to encourage students to question, interpret, analyze and debate about what they see, hear and read in daily life so as to understand how the media can never be neutral or impartial (Carr, 2009). By inviting students to question and explore how messages are constructed or produced within particular social, political, economic, and historical contexts, they will come to see how texts tend to portray an event from a selective and homogenized worldview by excluding other competing interests and contesting accounts (Carr, 2009).

By *deconstructing* the textual authority, that is, an author’s positionality, ideologies, and biases embedded within the text, students will see how “images or films or programs that just looked like light-hearted entertainment were really out to manipulate [them] ideologically” (Bazalgette, 1992, p. 141). With a better understanding of the (unequal) power dynamics that are dialectically mobilized between message production (causes) and

consumption (effects), opportunities for text *reconstruction* and meaningful socio-political changes are unfolded accordingly. In teaching the ability to access, question, reflect, analyze, evaluate, communicate, disrupt and reconstruct all forms of texts in an open-minded manner, critical educators must be careful not to impose their own value positions on their students. Instead, the educator's task is to facilitate each student to critically analyze and think for himself/herself so that they learn to make informed personal decisions (Carr, 2009). This understanding is extremely important, as the true capacity of critical literacy "links the creation of critical citizens" not to the (re)production of politically correct mimickers, but instead "to the development of a radical democracy" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 188).

Acritical Literacy: A Neutral Process of Reactionary Domestication

Education based on a form of inquiry that aims to develop students' critical literacy ought to employ a revolutionary pedagogy, rather than one that is solely reactionary. By making this claim, I mean to question the authenticity of the *Media (Critical) Literacy Education* implemented by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education in 2006. While *Media (Critical) Literacy Education* (MOE, 2006e) is integrated into all disciplinary subjects and recognizes how mass media messages, images and content can largely influence the way students construct their identities and perspectives, it is, however, employed as a mere "impact mediation" (Hobbs, 1998, p. 19) strategy to address youth's possible misbehaviour as the result of their exposure to a media-and-information saturated society. By using messages in a variety of forms and organizing content around social problems, such as violence, materialism, and racial, class, gender or sexual identity stereotyping, students' questioning about the media's negative influence does not need to be interrogated together with their own value positions, but acritically considered solely as the "facts" given by the teacher (MOE, 2006e).

Such a protectionist approach, in the view of Buckingham (1990), helps reinforce teacher-sanctioned knowledge, or “the third person effect”, wherein the teacher’s “correct” interpretations are to be unquestioningly accepted and faithfully copied by students. In agreement, Erstad, Gilje and deLang (2007) perceive that insofar as the necessary provision of space for personal and collective critical engagement is neglected, education is likely to keep (re)producing a spurious form of “cut-and-paste literacy”. Thus, Kellner and Share (2007) argue that if education means to develop critical, independent thinkers and informed citizens who commit to the ongoing democratic project of justice, it is necessary that we resist and challenge the apolitical framework of literacy that aims for “massification” (Freire, 1996, p. 129) – a process through which the people are reduced to “a manageable, unthinking agglomeration” (p. 129) and immobilized by their domesticated consciousness.

Linking Critical Thinking to Morally Just Actions

As evident from the previous section, the state’s critical literacy education fails to promote the importance of both unpacking assumption and examining implication. In addition, the Ministry of Education’s (2011a) construct of a linear model that intends to provide students with an effective problem-solving strategy reduces critical thinking to three lock-step procedures: (1) analyze and evaluate the current problem; (2) predict its possible future course; and (3) provide reasonable judgments or suggestions that can be used to help solve problems (p. 27). This mechanistic, *contextualless* model wrongly suggests that so long as a student has systematically followed the procedural guidelines, he/she would certainly reach the kind of criticality needed to solve *all*²⁸ kinds of problems. Such a model is argued by Kincheloe, Slattery and Steinberg (2000) and Case and Wright (1999) as apt to provoke

²⁸ According to Roberts (2010), Freire views problems as always incoming: when a problem is solved, a new problem will follow, regardless of whether or not it is in a dimorphous form. He further points out that for Freire there is not necessarily always a solution for every problem.

hyperrationalization, namely, simplistic casual explanations of complex questions and social problems. Consequently, the capacity of critical thinking for the reinvention of a more humane and just social relationality is subverted by the educational participants' ill-informed judgments.

For Hyslop-Margison and Armstrong (2004) and Siegel (1999), teaching students how to make critical judgments and morally-informed decisions presupposes classroom dialogical spaces for collective devotion to addressing the issues of power imbalances and injustices, in which each member's propositional or contextual knowledge of these social themes cannot be underemphasized. Certain character qualities, they continue, must also be developed in students, if they are to be successful critical, reflective thinkers, acting on the basis of their commitment to ethical imperialism. According to Freire (1998b), these personal attributes are the dispositions of open-mindedness, humility, tolerance, respect for difference, wholehearted interest, intellectual rigour, perseverance, and a critical spirit of dialogical inquiry. These dispositional components for Freire (1996, 1998a, 1998b) are not accidental, but indispensable to both criticality and ethicality. After all, self-sufficiency is antagonistic towards open dialogue as one never perceives one's own ignorance, while projecting it onto others. Dialogue, in Freire's (1996) view, is the chief catalyst for critical, ethical thinking, in that "without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true [critical and moral] education" (pp. 73-74).

A Life-long Journey for Humanization: Conscientized Dialogue with Alterity

A critical, educated life, Roberts (2012) asserts, is "a life filled with questions and uncertainties" (p. 10). Education, from this perspective, is not about imposing indoctrination and dogmatism, but inviting all participants to converse with each other about a life that is impregnated with doubts and contradictions. Accordingly, if people's opportunity to engage

in praxical dialogue and multi-perspectives is subverted, there can be no education, but dehumanizing oppression. Even though oppression can come in many different forms, its dehumanizing nature, Freire (1998a) emphasizes, “offend[s] the essence of human dignity and constitute[s] a radical negation of democracy” (p. 41). Every human being, as Freire (1976, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2004) perceives, has a shared ontological and historical vocation of *humanization* – becoming more *fully* human. This calling to “be more” is because humans, like knowledge, are necessarily incomplete, unfinished, in and with a constantly-changing world (Roberts, 2000). Freire (1998a) is adamant that being more fully human is to live as a “social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative person” (p. 45) who struggles against dehumanizing circumstances by successively carrying out the “critical practice of transgression²⁹” (Simons, 1995, p. 69). Such critical transgressions, Freire (1996) stresses, are where “the beauty of our humanity resides” (p. 60), because they are underpinned by our capacity to love all fellow human beings, for our collective liberation. And if liberation is indeed a painful childbirth as Freire (1996) claims, we should not expect a humanizing education to be a comfortable, smooth process in which individuals’ personal selves are unstartled and their views unchallenged. Instead, it will be an enduring, uncomfortable, challenging dialogical encounter with difference that is synonymous with Arendt’s notion of “visiting” (Disch, 1994).

Visiting, which connects human pluralism through dialogical communication, is certainly not the same as tourism, which ensures “you will have all the comforts of home even as you travel” (Arendt, cited in Disch, 1994, pp. 158-159). Visiting, Arendt says, requires one to

²⁹ The critical practice of transgression recognizes limits as both constraining and enabling. Thus, a transgression as such may be viewed as having two-fold functions: to illuminate limits, while overcoming them. For Foucault (1984), the critical practice of transgression affords human beings infinite possibilities to think and do otherwise for “the undefined work of freedom” (cited in Biesta, 2007b, p. 7).

listen carefully and disorient oneself towards an understanding about “how the world looks different to someone else” (cited in Disch, 1994, p. 159) in order to allow the appearance of “enlarged thought” (cited in Disch, 1994, p. 153) or multi-perspective (moral) visioning. It is for this reason that we may view visiting as consistent with Levinas’ (2004) idea of *alterity*, given “the knowing being [the self] lets the known being [Others] manifest itself while respecting its alterity” (p. 42). We may also claim that visiting alterity is compatible with Freire’s (1976) belief that “no one can know everything, just as no one can be ignorant of everything” (p. 117), so that “there is always more to learn *from* others” (Roberts, 2001, p. 152). By making these claims, I mean to defend Freire’s liberating, conscientized education which Biesta (2010a) misconstrues as an alterity-subversive, banking pedagogical approach:

emancipation is based upon a fundamental *inequality* between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated...the emancipator is the one who knows better and best and who can perform the act of *demystification* [by] provid[ing] us with an account of our objective condition....As long as the master remains a master, the slave can only ever become a *former* slave or an *emancipated* slave....Should slaves remain grateful to their masters for setting them free? (pp. 44-45).

While not denying that demystification plays a central role in Freirean education, Freire, however, does not seem to encourage liberating educators to adopt the role of superiority, or intend to undermine the importance of others and their difference. A genuine conscientized dialogue, as Freire (1996) explains,

cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s “depositing” ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be “consumed” by the discussants...dialogue is an encounter among [human difference]...it must not be a situation where some

name it on behalf of others. It is an act of [re]creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another (p. 70).

The true spirit of conscientization and its embedded dialogical scrutiny, even though directed by the teacher, is not to dominate, nor to impose one's thinking on others, because "the teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking" (Freire, 1996, p. 58). As a social movement from magical or naïve consciousness toward critical consciousness, conscientized dialogue, from Giroux's (2011) perspective, means to invite all participants to contribute their distinctive viewpoints beyond the seeming naturalness of the current social reality in order to challenge seemingly commonsensical knowledge, to move beyond the immediate confines of personal experiences, to enter into dialogical relations and actions, and to morally imagine a future that will not merely reproduce the present capitalist ugliness.

Bridging Freireanism and Buddhism

Rooted in the present and the concrete, Freire's pedagogy of dialogical and reflective praxis speaks to the heart of Buddhist ethics. According to Skiotis (2003), Buddhism regards the ultimate source of moral understanding as coming directly from people's conscious awareness of, reflection upon, and interpretative communication about their lived experience. In Buddhist ethics, human beings' highest purpose is not to pursue *having more (material possessions)*, but *being more awake*, echoing Freirean subjects who are conscientized to pursue the collective vocation of being more fully human. For Buddhism, this awakening is possible to the extent that we critically reflect on the limitations and possibilities of our existential situation, and are mindfully aware of our fundamental interdependence with others who are in and with this world (Skiotis, 2003). Thus, neither Freire nor Buddhists would support the state education's position of keeping people in ignorance or in a state of

“non-thinking”³⁰. This, however, does not mean that ignorance has no role to play in the educative, dialogical encounter. Quite the contrary, it is only when I embrace my *ignorance* that I can truly learn from Others: Others whose different experiences with, translations of, and social relations within the world challenge my finite, contingent knowledge of the world (Roberts, 2000). Thus, we may assume that the authentication of reflective dialogical discourse for Freire and Buddhists is fundamentally based on an assumption of “equality of [human] intelligence” (Rancière, 1995, p. 51). After all, it is only when each dialogist’s ability to think and to know is respectfully trusted that we can expect purposeful, awakening conversations to be inaugurated.

Visiting a Dissonant World through Awakening Dialogue

Awakening dialogue that visits human difference and searches the *causes* of social reality would certainly not seek to impose harmony and consensus on conflicting issues, but to open up a space for legitimate agonistic contestation (Todd, 2010). This understanding is extremely important for state education, given that Confucianism’s heritage has long discouraged students from confronting opposing ideas, in order to achieve a peaceful social existence. From Mouffe’s (2005) perspective, approaching the plural nature of social life with the goals of harmony and consensus denies the inevitable conflicts that come from our different value positions. Such a denial in turn undermines the role of *dissonance* that is so indispensable in our democratic struggles. Consequently, Mouffe (2005) argues that if education is to contribute to a robust form of democratic life, the antagonistic dimension of human interaction should not and must not be avoided, removed or dismissed, but debated, contested, and negotiated in an open-minded manner.

³⁰ Refer to Chapter 8, p. 158 for more details of this particular Taiwanese governance approach.

Within the contested, antagonistic space, the art of *silence* cannot be overemphasized, for it helps by “opening up a space for contemplation that would otherwise be compromised by the clutter of too much talk” (Roberts, 2012, p. 7). For Roberts (2012), silence reflects something worthy of engagement in which one shows one’s profound respect for Others by quietly listening to, and critically reflecting upon what they have said and what they are saying. Certainly silence would not allow dialogical scrutiny to lapse into either mere ideal conversation, or anything-goes relativism (Roberts, 2000, 2012), because it is the preliminary preparation for one to introduce respectful criticism. It should be noted that criticism must be respectful, rather than destructive, because the aim is not to crush the inquisitiveness of participants, but to challenge each member’s subjective perception of a situation in his/her creative, discovery process of knowing (Roberts, 2000). Respectful criticism, in the views of Mouffe (2005) and Todd (2010), is capable of translating social antagonism into amenable forms of democratic conflict, wherein each participant recognizes opponents not as “illegitimate enemies”, but as “legitimate adversaries” who, like himself/herself, have the right to signify, establish and secure their own views and interpretations. It is precisely through this turn to critical dissonance that education can promote more intelligible ways of living together, and that students can come to see how their conversation with a plurality-based democracy is essentially based on their sustained openness to listening, countering and responding to perspectives that are different from their own.

In addition to the protection of human plurality, agonistic or argumentative activities also contribute to the shift of the question from *what* the subject is to that of *who* the subject is and *when* this singular subject comes into presence (Nancy, Peter & Eduardo, 1991). This issue is discussed in the next chapter in relation to the Levinasian subject and his transcendent view of (moral and just) education.

Chapter Eleven:

VISITING LEVINAS FOR A TRANSCEDENT EDUCATION WITH ALTERED EGOS

By exploring the way the subject and his/her freedom is understood by Levinas (1998a, 2004), this chapter will demonstrate how a heteronomous-autonomy-based education has the potential not only to support social pluralism and responsibility, but also to develop students' unique individuality and refine pedagogical (or more broadly human) relationality.

Education grounded in a transcendent view of responsibility would broaden the scope of what is currently considered to be educationally desirable (Biesta, 2010b). Valuing the in-between human relationship, pedagogical design would emphasize activities that will enable each participant to articulate themselves to Others in the wider global/national contexts (Butler, 2006; Todd, 2001b), to reinvent their personal selves with and for Others (Strhan, 2009), and to actively take part in the process of knowing how to learn and act with Others, with their creative imagination and infinite (utopian) hopes.

Rather than thinking about education in relation to the normative ethical principles, both Freire and Levinas, as I would argue in this chapter, provide a way of thinking about how ethicality is possible in education, through a non-violent, susceptible self-other relation and a pedagogy of self-alteration. What I will argue also is a need to modify Levinas' perception of fraternal love so that our ethical responsibility becomes something registered and practised through a dialectical relation among our feelings (the unconscious realm of sensibility), reflective awareness, and transformative intentionality. In this way our moral actions are to be underpinned not only by "a relationship with alterity, with *mystery*...with the *future*, with what is never there" (Levinas, 1987; cited in Todd, 2003, p. 6), but also by

“men and women in the[ir] ‘here and now’” (Freire, 1996, p. 66), so that democratic justice is enabled to come in the concrete present and always keep coming in future societies.

Transcendent Education: Not a Process of Objectification, but Subjectification

In the previous chapter, I have pointed out that education based on an open approach to classroom debates has the capacity to move to the question of *who* is the subject and *when* this subject comes into presence (Nancy, Peter & Eduardo, 1991), from the question of *what* the subject is. The term “comes into presence” refers to “someone as some *one*, as this singular being” (Biesta, 1999, p. 215), meaning that a person is no longer treated as an object to be moulded externally in a certain way, but is singularized as an unique, irreplaceable, individual subject. To put it differently, a transcendent approach to pedagogy is concerned with how “subjectification” (Biesta, 2009b, p. 33) as a process of individuation is possible within the socializing space provided.

Subjectification is perceived by Biesta (2009b) as the direct opposite of socialization: the former does not seek to insert newcomers into existing orders, but to develop independence from such orders. I would argue, however, that such a clear division between the two is impossible; we can at best say that the unique individuality (subjectification) is being incubated and developed from the formative process of habitus (socialization). For example, my utopian education is one where students are socialized into critical, responsible and ethical ways of being within the deliberative space provided. Nevertheless, the way in which each student demonstrates his/her criticality, responsibility and ethicality is something that comes with infinite possibility, something that I simply cannot know or determine in advance. It is precisely this infinite possibility of students’ distinctively critical, responsible, ethical responses that enables them to come into presence as irreducible, irreplaceable singularities.

What this implies is that the question of *who* is the subject can only be answered in the very moment and the very activity when this “who” presents himself/herself to the class (Nancy, Peter & Eduardo, 1991). It implies also that the disclosure of the subject should not be understood as revealing some kind of pre-established reason and identity (for example, the impersonal autonomy) because “the domain of [revelatory] action is boundless and inherently unpredictable” (Arendt, 1989, pp. 190-191). Understanding the dialectical relation between socialization and subjectification shows how the revelation of oneself is only possible between human beings, or intersubjectivity, in which one not only presents his/her unique self to himself/herself, but also to the community. Consequently, such a community is no longer funded on a “common being” (Nancy, Peter & Eduardo, 1991, p. 8), but one that is ultimately based on plurality, what Biesta (2004c) terms as “the community of those who have nothing in common” (p. 307) or “the community of strangers” (p. 318).

A Subjectified Self is Heteronomously Summoned yet Responds Autonomously

From the Levinasian (1998a) perspective, subjectification speaks to the duality of the self as both heteronomous and autonomous and thus makes ethics possible. In this model of heteronomous autonomy, there can be no autonomous subjects who are not already heteronomous (Butler, 2006). The self is understood as both *passively receptive* and *actively responsive* in the face-to-face encounter with the Other: “in passivity, the Other addresses me and I am heteronomous, yet the address founds my responsibility: it is I who am the author of my response” (Strhan, 2009, p. 10).

Unlike the Kantian rational subject who is incapable of accommodating plurality because “any relation between individuals” is reduced to “reason relating to itself, a monologue” (Dudiak, 2001, p. 25), the Levinasian subject emerges only in the context of difference, in

which the encounter itself demands an inescapable responsibility from me as a singular, autonomous self. As Levinas (2004) explains:

It is only in approaching the Other that I attend to myself. This does not mean that my existence is constituted in the thought of the others....The face I welcome makes me pass from phenomenon to being in another sense: in discourse I expose myself to the questioning of the Other, and this urgency of the response – acuteness of the present – engenders me for responsibility; as responsible I am brought to my final reality (p. 178).

By sensitively attending to the unique way in which I am summoned and made responsible by the Other, this means that my subjectivity is discovered through expressing and revealing myself to others, rather than something I can discover within myself: “To produce oneself as I – is to apprehend oneself with the same gesture that already turns toward the exterior to extra-vert and to manifest- to respond for what it apprehends – to express” (Levinas, 2004, p. 205). In responding to the Other’s election, or what Joldersma (2008) refers to as “ethical heteronomy” (p. 42), Levinas (1996) asserts that the self simultaneously confirms his/her singularity as irreplaceable: “[t]he uniqueness of the I is the fact that no one can answer for me” (cited in Strhan, 2007, p. 419).

The Levinasian Subject: Absolute Non-Egoist Responsibility Comes with Infinite Freedom

The Levinasian subject is thus one who comes into presence in the intersubjective space, a space that Biesta (1999) calls an “ethical space” (p. 213). The in-between human relationship that underpins this space is more a *sensible* than a *rational* one. My sensible responsibility to alterity, Levinas (2004) says, requires the idea of *infinity*, which puts my

egoist spontaneity of the same – freedom of will and reason – into question and thus makes ethics possible. He writes, “The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics” (p. 43). For Levinas (1989), this ethical form of responsibility I have for the Other is “older than the ego, prior to principles” (cited in Biesta, 1999, p. 213), something that is asymmetrical, like an “obsession,” independent of my choice. Levinas (2004) notes that, “what I permit myself to demand of myself is not comparable with what I have the right to demand of the Other. This moral experience, so commonplace, indicates a metaphysical asymmetry” (p. 53).

According to Strhan (2007, 2009), my state of being hostage to the Other is not the same as bowing before the tyrannical authority of the Other. Instead, this authority of the Other stems from his/her very vulnerability, which makes his/her interpellation something more urgent than my own needs. It is, in other words, that I am singularly elected by this “authority of vulnerability” (Strhan, 2007, p. 425), which I turn to embrace in order to be “a pure one-for-the-other” (Levinas, 1998a, p. 78) and hence become free. As I have stated in Chapter 6, the self’s responsibility for the Other’s vulnerability is shared across Levinas’ and Confucius’ moral philosophy. In order to demonstrate such a commonality, it is necessary that we consider an anecdote of Qi Xuan Wang, an emperor during the Warring States Period, who employed Mencius, a student of Confucius, as his Foreign Minister. Due to his belief in Mencius’ (hence Confucius’) philosophy, Qi Xuan Wang saved a cow that was to be sacrificed, not because he was against this traditional ritual, but because he had an actual face-to-face encounter with the cow; the cow’s terror called Qi Xuan Wang to be morally accountable for its vulnerability (Zhang, 2009).

Even though I recognize that Others for Levinas generally refers to humans rather than non-humans, this anecdote nonetheless supports his interpretation of the moral responsibility elicited by our face-to-face encounter with alterity. Based on this anecdote, we may thus affirm that Confucianism and Levinasianism share a certain similarity. In both Confucius' and Levinas' moral discourse, to love and to assume responsibility for Others is no longer because those people share a certain degree of sameness with me, nor is it because I am implicated in a reciprocal bond of responsibility; it is rather because their very otherness deserves my full respect and responsibility. This perception of responsibility in turn challenges the Kantian subject with regard to one's freedom (rather than responsibility) as the primary foundation of life.

Levinas (1998a, 2004) is adamant that the subject's freedom is followed by his/her responsibility for alterity and not the other way around. For Levinas (1998a, 2004), freedom is invested with dual meaning: it is common to human beings and yet paradoxically something that separates or individualizes us. This is because freedom for Levinas (1998a, 2004) is only possible when the self lets the approach of the Other shatter his/her self-interest and comes to a state of non-reciprocal duty in order to respond to the needs of the Other in an individualized, unprecedented way. This in turn shows how the Kantian subject's impersonal autonomy or *interior* rational law, which reduces the Other to the realm of the same, is unable to bring about freedom, as freedom must be commanded by an *exterior* alterity, a concrete presence which, for his/her precise otherness, is neither changeable nor reducible. Chalier's (2002) account should be cited fully here as he has pertinently distinguished the Kantian and Levinasian views on freedom:

The Kantian idea of a transcendental freedom and of a timeless choice defends...
the idea that freedom is primary and foundational. The subject's responsibility is

deduced from it, whatever the chance even of its existence. In supporting the thesis of the moral subject's election, Levinas displaces the axis of that mode of thought. Only the response to election or to that appeal – responsibility – gives man a sense of freedom. In discovering that it alone is capable of responding, the subject discovers its uniqueness and only then its freedom (p. 7).

Levinas' Phenomenological Ethics, Transcendent Responsibility and a Yet-to-Come Justice

Ethics for Levinas (1998a, 2004) is the spiritual optics, whereas justice is absolute non-egoism, meaning that ethics should be viewed from a spiritual (rather than physical/tangible) perspective, and justice is only possible when everyone achieves a state of non-egoism. Situating ethics in phenomenology, Levinas (1998a, 2004) is more apt to decipher the transcendent conditions of our responsibility, rather than prescribing how such a responsibility looks in concrete practice. However, he speaks of “saintliness” as the prerequisite condition for our infinite altruistic responsibility: “I maintain that this ideal of saintliness is presupposed in all our value judgments...[in] which [we] hold justice as the absolutely desirable end and hence as a perfection... justice is always a justice which desires a better justice” (Levinas, 1998a, p. 177).

Clearly, what Levinas (1998a) provides is not a formulaic ethical framework, but a possibility of justice that extends “behind the straight line of the law” to “the land of goodness...infinite and unexplored” (Levinas, 2004, p. 235). This is because rule-based ethics can in fact limit our responsibility, as Bauman (1993) explains:

Rules would tell me what to do and when; rules would tell me where my duty starts and when it ends; rules would allow me to say, at some point, that I may rest now as everything that had to be done has been done (p. 13).

What ethics requires then is our openness towards an *unknowable* form of responsibility, independent of the need for a prior commitment. It is because of the position of *ignorance* that one assumes, based on one's relation to Others as one of unknowability, that justice can become a justice that is yet to be realized in human practice.

For Levinas (1998a), our unknowable or transcendent responsibility is possible because “subjectivity is sensibility”, because the Other is not a subject of thoughts and speech, but “a subject of flesh and blood” (cited in Todd, 2003, p. 39). Such a claim is underpinned by his belief that love can never know what it seeks, and hence our responsibility, derived from our love for Others, is “the signification of the sensible [which] does not belong to the movement of cognition” (cited in Todd, 2003, p. 39). Nevertheless, unconscious affective sensibility, as I will argue below in the section “Modifying Levinasian Ethics and Justice”, is insufficient in the face of concrete ethical dilemmas. Further, I contend that unconscious affective sensibility's divergence from cognitive intentionality has limited, if any, capacity to fight against existential unjust realities – inequitable structures, manipulative ideologies and dehumanizing practices – inaugurated by asymmetrical power-relations in the society.

My contention has to be understood in relation to the way Levinas (1987) interprets the entailments of one's love for justice. For him, the actions derived from our love for justice are “neither a *struggle*, nor a fusion, nor a *knowledge*...[but] a relationship with alterity, with *mystery*...with the *future*, with what is never there” (cited in Todd, 2003, p. 6). This phenomenological understanding of justice overlooks how “the point of [ethical] departure

must always be with men and women in the[ir] ‘*here and now*’” (Freire, 1996, p. 66).

Equally overlooked is the way our love and responsibility for others “must generate other acts of freedom” (Freire, 1996, p. 71), namely, the abolishment of concrete dehumanizing oppression in order to bring about a more symmetrical power relation and hence a more just society. By making these claims, I by no means suggest that the theory of transcendent responsibility put forth by Levinas is unimportant. But, as it stands, this theory, I propose, should yield a space for Freire’s conscientized-political-intentional agents, if justice is not only something yet to be *coming*, but also something that *comes* in the concrete present.

Ethics through Education: Altered Ego for a Better Relational Quality

According to Todd (2003), applying Levinasian ethics to educational practices requires our shift of focus from the *type* of teacher-student/student-student relationship to one that emphasizes its *quality*. Gallop (1999) articulates that the quality of educational relationality is largely dependent on participants’ *receptive sensibility* towards one another. Receptive sensibility requires each participant to focus on the absolute otherness and the transcendence of what is directly manifested in Others’ speech and gesture (what lies beyond communication), so that a supposedly more ethical self-other relationship may be (re)established (Todd, 2003). To be open and susceptible to alterity is to welcome the questioning of Others and to embrace the possibility of the self being challenged, disrupted, transformed and altered (Todd, 2003). One would, however, be mistaken in believing that this *pedagogy of self-alteration* informed by Levinasian philosophy is something that is absent from Freirean education.

Even though Freirean education seems to promote self-affirmation more than self-alteration, it is important that we understand the purpose of the former for Freire (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c) is not to affirm the individual student’s egoist self, but to enable each to come to see

himself/herself as a subject, rather than a mere object of history and culture. In fact, I would argue further that Freire's praxis affords infinite possibilities to interrupt and to alter the ego, as the conscientized teacher and students constantly reinvent themselves and thus change their relations with Others alongside their dialogical visiting. Accordingly, I suggest that we view both Levinas (1998a, 2004) and Freire (1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c) as contributing to a way of thinking about ethics *through* education, or how ethicality is possible in education. The quality of a non-violent, susceptible relation requires participants to understand how profoundly we can be implicated in each other's lives (Todd, 2003). This in turn requires all participants to ensure that our every daily response to one another is made on the premise of ethicality, delivered after reflective contemplation and thoughtful judgment.

Alterity Brings Me More than I Contain

For Levinas (2004), teaching is to thematize phenomena taught to me by the Other who presents himself/herself. The presence of the Other provides his/her truth about the world: "The world [then] becomes an object. To be an object, to be a theme, is to be what I can speak of with someone who has broken through the screen of phenomena and has associated me with himself" (p. 99).

In order to welcome the incoming of the Other's world, Joldersma (2011) underscores the importance of "distantiation" (p. 445) – a process that is similar to Arendt's notion of visiting (Disch, 1994), through which one decentres the self-centredness of his/her understanding towards the Other's interpretations and comes to see how his/her knowledge is indeed finite and partial. In agreement, Biesta (2003) stresses that it is participants' otherness that really teaches in a Levinasian classroom. It is the differences between teacher and student, student and student, that provide a form of knowledge which, by Felman's (1997) definition, "comes [exteriorly] as a surprise" (cited in Todd, 2001a, p. 446). This

surprise, in Levinas' (2004) view, has been neglected by the history of Western philosophy, as evident in the teaching of Socrates as maieutics, namely, "to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me" (p. 43). Socrates perceived knowledge and understanding to be *in* the individual so "there is no teaching but recollection" (cited in Strhan, 2007, p. 414). In radical opposition, Levinas (2004) insists that education in and of itself means:

To receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught....Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain (p. 51).

The previous statement of "the world becomes an object" (Levinas, 2004, p. 99) is purposefully drawn to question the appropriateness of Joldersma's (2001) casual extension of Levinas' notion of alterity from persons to the world in order to challenge Freire's praxical approach. As Joldersma (2001) states:

Objects [the world] are not other, but part of the subject's same, a reduction to identity. To the extent that they are objects they have no mystery but are something known, grasped, conceptualized. Objects are entities *domesticated* for possession and control by removing their alterity (p. 8).

As evident in Levinas' (1998a, 2004) own words, his opposition to conceptualization, thematization and comprehension is not directed against our knowledge of the world or social reality, but our knowledge of Other human beings who are, as cited earlier from Todd (2003), "subject[s] of flesh and blood" (p. 39).

If my reading of Levinas is not mistaken, Freire's notion of praxis in which two or more subjects seek to establish an epistemological relationship between themselves and the world through generative words and themes (e.g. unjust social phenomena) is in no way opposed to Levinas' perception of justice. This is because the object of the investigation, Freire (1996) has repeatedly asserted, "is not persons (as if they were anatomical fragments), but rather the thought-language with which men and women refer to reality...in which their generative themes are found" (p. 78). Freire (1996) warns that anyone who makes people passive objects of the investigation "betrays their own character as a killer of life" (p. 89). By reconsidering the complexity of the human-world relationship or social reality, Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lohann, Shakman and Terrell (2009) argue that there would no longer be dichotomy between knowledge and justice in that the two simply become "complementary goals" (p. 636).

Modifying Levinasian Ethics and Justice

Notwithstanding Levinasian theory of ethics and justice is very convincing, it is, however, not without limitation when being put into educational practice. For someone to participate in a non-violent relation to the Other, Levinas (2004) stresses that this person needs to open up himself/herself to what the face-to-face encounter entails. "The face", Levinas (2004) says, "is a living presence; it is expression....The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse" (p. 66). Levinas (2004) speaks of discourse as "the experience of something absolutely foreign...a traumatism of astonishment" (p. 73), which in turn requires one's sensitivity to its absolute singularity. Following this line of thinking, the teacher needs to be open to the faces of his/her students and always subject to each of them as well as their unique, irreducible interpellations. Nonetheless, educational encounter is, by nature, multi-personal and this leads to the questioning of Makridis (2003) and Zheng (2007): how is it possible to manage Levinas' (2004) person-to-person as interpersonal encounter justly

when a teacher is simultaneously summoned by two or more students? To put it differently, to which individual student should the teacher be responsible when each elevation carries considerable ethical weight that can neither be sacrificed nor delayed?

In this regard, Levinas' phenomenological ethics, which is situated in our *unreflected, affective sensibility*, is argued by Bergo (2005) and Makridis (2003) to be an inadequate theoretical framework for teachers to address the *concrete* occurrence of ethical dilemma. Given neither Bergo (2005) nor Makridis (2003) has provided suggestions to address this inadequacy, I shall put forward my own proposal by suggesting an understanding of responsibility as something being registered and practised not through a dichotomized, but a dialectical relation between our feelings (unconscious realm of sensibility) and conscious awareness and reflective deliberation. This means that the teacher in the face of ethical dilemma not only needs to resort to his/her affectivity, but also needs to think carefully about what he/she ought to do on the basis of his/her sensibility in order to make a respectful judgment to address this difficult situation at hand.

On the other hand, I wish to suggest further that we extend Levinas' idea of "encountering alterity" from the face-to-face to one that includes the non-face-to-face also. This extension, in my view, is necessary if we are to be at all responsible for Others whom we have yet to meet, or whom we will perhaps never meet in person. This non-face-to-face encounter should be conceived as one's receptive engagement with the Other and his/her otherness via all forms of text, such as biographies, narratives, and film. In this new definition of alterity encounter, students are not only to be moved by their "proximate" class members and respond to the questions posed by these members, but also to be touched by the work of Others, and respond to those questions raised by these Others.

In *Teachers as Culture Workers – Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, Freire (1998b) expresses a similar view: students need to read the texts with emotions, feelings and cognition from which they learn how to relate themselves to the texts produced by the Other in another context, and articulate or rework the meaning of the texts/contexts as a respectful, responsible response to the Other. Likewise, in *Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility*, Todd (2001b) explores how the feeling of guilt (as students' response) arises from her students' engagement with the non-face-to-face encounter, that is, stories of suffering (e.g. newspaper articles on wars and homelessness) play a critical role in both making restitution and the very formation of responsibility itself. The non-face-to-face encounter is thus also a type of learning informed exteriorly, wherein students, while learning to articulate their own complex responses, are enabled to see how their responses, despite differing in content, would inevitably always implicate other people who are integral to their personal life.

Towards a Heteronomous-Autonomy-Based Education

Regardless of the forms (face-to-face/non-face-to-face) of educational encounter, they should always project the heteronomous autonomy/interdependent self, rather than individualized autonomy/independent self, as the goal. This is because conditions, whether oppressive or not, are socially produced, so the maintenance or transformation of these conditions is likewise exclusively dependent on our collective intelligence. Hence, I suggest educators who wish to develop students' heteronomous autonomy focus on activities that will enable each to remake himself/herself *with* and *for* Others so as to bring about a radically democratic society where there is a passion for perfect justice. Butler (2005) would agree as she claims:

The self at issue is clearly “formed” within a set of social conventions that raise the question whether a good life can be conducted within a bad one, and whether we might, in recrafting ourselves with and for another, participate in the remaking of social conditions (pp. 134-135).

Understanding education as a life-long pursuit of humanization requires participants to recognize education’s inherent social, ethical and political character. This means that the focus should not merely be on education’s economic and pragmatic benefits, but on highlighting the importance of personal/collective growth and well-being, and political and moral agency, as well as the ability to live together under the conditions of uncertainty, controversy and plurality (Biesta, 2010d). It is important to note that the emphasis on the political nature of education is not to promote certain party politics, but to advocate teaching and learning *through* democracy, so that students learn citizenry through their authentic participation in democratic processes and practices. It is, after all, impossible to teach *about* and/or teach *for* democracy without students having actually experienced it: “you learn democracy by making democracy, but with limits” (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 90).

Democratic educators in a transcendent educational discourse will thus broaden the scope of what is considered to be educationally valuable and desirable. They will lead students into an understanding in which our struggles for autonomy cannot and must not privilege the rational at the expense of sensibility (Strhan, 2007, 2009) – sensibility to the insufficiency and vulnerability of Others that necessarily demands our infinite socio-political responsibility. As Butler (2006) explains:

If I am struggling for autonomy, do I not also need to be struggling for something else as well, a conception of myself as invariably in community, impressed upon

by others, impinging upon them as well (p. 27)...and our “responsibility” lies in the juncture between the two. What can I do with the conditions that form me? What do they constrain me to do? What can I do to transform them? (p. 16).

Butler’s (2006) thesis suggests a necessary shift, and this is consistent with Gilbert’s (2005, 2010) perspective, to evaluating student learning growth by qualitative instead of quantitative criteria. Rather than valuing students’ capacity for memorizing dead knowledge, that is, their numerical scores in examinations, the Taiwanese education system should acknowledge the impossibility of measuring, or pinning down students’ real-world intelligence as it is always evolving, manifested through the quality of their interpersonal and multipersonal interaction and communication. In short, assessing student learning on the basis of the changes in their relationality with themselves, and with Others in and with this world, is not merely something to be considered, but urgently necessary if the Taiwanese cramming educational culture is to be dismantled and transformed.

In addition to this shift in education assessment and evaluation, Butler’s (2006) remark also implies the need for educators to contemplate the many possible ways to articulate their students to Others in the wider global/national contexts. One possibility that can contribute positively to the developmental process of students’ heteronomous autonomy and political agency is to introduce sensitive, controversial materials to the classroom’s dialogical, reflective space (Andreotti & Warwick, 2007; Todd, 2001b). By drawing students’ attention to challenging life-themes, they will become more aware of themselves as not only being acted upon, but also acting on social discourse and relationships (Strhan, 2009). Hopefully, with their mindful awareness, students will autonomously take the initiation of “limit-acts” (Freire, 1996, p. 80) directed towards overcoming oppressive social conditions.

It should be noted I say “hopefully”, which implies that the educator, however well-intentioned, must not impose changes on students, otherwise students become mere non-thinking doers who are “possessed” by the thinking educator. Freire (1996) reminds liberating educators about two key principles when engaging with the revolutionary task:

one is the actual needs of the masses [students] rather than what we fancy they need, and the other is the wishes of the masses [students], who must make up their own minds instead of our making up their mind for them (p. 75).

Even though whether or not students will devote themselves to social transformation must remain uncertain, one thing that can be assured is that through their respectful, susceptible engagement with difference, critical reflection on and analysis of the dialectical relationships between language, power, socio-cultural practices and inequalities, and hopeful imagination of alternatives, they will come to better understand the contradiction-saturated human life in a way that is both consciously critical and ethically sensible.

Concluding Remarks

The Taiwanese people must not accept an autonomy-based education that is being used to legitimate dehumanizing practices to manipulate, exploit, oppress, or even exclude the have-nots. It is important for the centre to recognize that the development of a robust knowledge-based economy is not possible when the society is divided and stratified, and where different social groups are antipathetical towards one another (OECD, 2000). Thus, instead of prioritizing sameness, conformity, rationality, individuality, and competition, encouragement should be given to diversity, critical dissonance, emotions, feelings,

connectedness and cooperation (Gilbert, 2005). A society that is strongly cohesive requires a radical democracy in which differences are sincerely respected simply for their own right to be.

Underpinned by Freirean and Levinasian philosophy, this heteronomous-autonomy-based education that supports the development of both unique individuality and the furtherance of the Taiwanese conventional collectivism through developing students' epistemological curiosity, intellectual seriousness, critical literacy, ethical commitment, moral responsibility and political agency has much more capacity to develop the type of knowledge partners required by postmodern industries. A democratic educational milieu is capable of gradually desocializing Taiwanese students from their long-habituated passivity, so that each is facilitated to become active and creative in the knowledge-input-and-output processes. This truly responsible, just and critical education, I believe, will better enable the educators and the educated to participate in the process of knowing how to learn, to think, to respect, to love, to hope, to collaborate and to live with Others in the face of infinite challenges posed by the continuity of historical time and place.

Chapter Twelve:

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued that a radical change is needed concerning the paradigm shift in knowledge and educational approaches. Such a change, in which we shift neo-liberalism's mechanistic, reductionist epistemology to Freire's dialectical totality, first and foremost implicates a move beyond the current democratic capitalism to democratic socialism. Instead of viewing the global/national society as a sole constitution of a market relation between self-interested atomistic individuals, we shall view it as a totality, constituted by the multi-layered interaction between the various complex (political, economic, cultural) systems and interdependent social actors. On this basis, the individual nation's/institution's/self's ethical relation to Other nations/institutions/people cannot compromise with any hegemonic/sanctioning attempt to govern/be governed from "above", to reduce ontological entailment (like neo-liberalism's economic, instrumental reductionism) or to totalize or homogenize national/institutional/human subjectivity.

Accordingly, responsabilization would no longer be about the equalization of autonomy, as it not only exaggerates the extent of ownership and adequacy of the nation/institution/self, but also seeks to legitimate a particular Western way of being, through the imposition of a capitalist, rational, scientific, objectivist, and quantitative approach to the development, management and measurement of the nation/institution/individual. In a communitarian democracy, responsabilization recognizes the internal obstacles, concerning insufficiency and vulnerability, to the individual nation's/institution's/citizen's development. Therefore, it would aim to equalize power by ensuring resources are distributed to each and all, in accordance not with the principles of rationality, conditionality, and differentiation, but with those of fairness and equity. This power-equalization would also shift its underpinning of

equality from “equal because of the same” to “different but equal”, for it is derived from the understandings of how social solidarity cannot be secured by identity politics (the strategy of separatism or divide and rule), but politics of difference, as well as of the importance of social capital for the assurance of intellectual and human capital in developing a robust knowledge-based economy.

This epistemological paradigm shift, in addition to the implication for a radical, social democracy that replaces people’s possession of rights and freedom to choose with their fundamental right to be different and to be unconditionally responsible to and for Others, also introduces new ways of thinking about pedagogical approaches, arrangement, evaluation and design. Instead of adhering to the monistic, mechanistic epistemology that employs a pedagogy of answer and confines education to monological communication, direct transmission, rote memorization and mimicking repetition, we shall promote a pedagogy of question, epistemological pluralism, and dynamic dialogical communication in which students learn to inquire with curiosity, probe into, critically interpret, analyze and evaluate the object of study, by which they learn to maturely communicate their intelligence and cooperatively create new knowledge by recreating their existing knowledge. Instead of trying to overcome temporal uncertainty by arranging educational activities under a set of standardized norms, we shall acknowledge the way our hope for education is animated by uncertainty, unknowability and unpredictability, and the impossibility of quantitatively measuring students’ (know-how) knowledge and their formative, qualitative aspects of learning outcome. Instead of trying to maintain a contextualess and neutral education, we shall situate learning in students’ concrete contexts, articulate their learning to other people in the global/national setting and be sensitive to their positionality and the changes (as growth) they make throughout their learning journey. Instead of practising authoritarian engineering and projecting objectification (learning to become) as the goal of learning, we

shall practise democratic authority and facilitate the subjectification (learning to becoming) of each student, through encouraging the advent of their singularized respond-ability during their ongoing intersubjective interaction.

Subjectification – a heteronomously-conditioned process through which students' autonomy is being developed – demonstrates how the cultivation of autonomy does not require any coercion, but democratic-heteronomy. A democratic state with a sensitized, responsabilized population would necessarily embrace the role of ignorance towards Others and their otherness, rather than the knowledge of alterity. For it is through the reduction of Other nations'/people's difference to the realm of the same that the existing social inequalities are being historically perpetuated under neo-liberalism's false, instrumental generosity: the enlightenment projects of humanitarian assistencialization and the Third Way promotion of communal gentility. With the aim of increasing market profitability and economic productivity, neo-liberalism's instrumental reductionism that pays little regard to other aspects of human life is only capable of maximizing the well-being of a few privileged individuals, rather than of the society as a whole. Thus, rather than advocating the neo-liberal ideas of "knowledge capitalism", "lifelong learning entrepreneur", "possessive individualism", "atomistic individualism", "competitive meritocratism", and "consumerist imperialism", we should rethink these ideas as "knowledge collectivism", "lifelong learning partners", "generous socialism", "social holism", "cooperative egalitarianism", and "ethical imperialism".

In so doing, neo-liberal individuals' private interests and market rights are simultaneously replaced with collective concerns and social rights (as ethical-political responsibility) wherein each and all repoliticize the citizenry, not through their sustained conformity and rational agreement, but through dissonance, contestation, deliberation and negotiation about

common issues in the public sphere. Such a participatory democracy that seeks to humanize the society by dismantling political domination, cultural imposition, ideological manipulation, and other forms of dehumanizing oppression manifests not only the public's true generosity (underpinned by a being-for modality), but also their critical, ethical, and rigorous spirit in co-governing and in making sure of an egalitarian-rather-than-capitalist-based community. It is by regrounding citizens' democratic subjectivity in the commitment for, and passion about the ongoing project of democratic justice, that the Taiwanese people can move beyond the neo-liberal myth of perpetual (cognitive) adaptation; they can come into presence as unique subjects of history and culture, and bring their society (which necessarily includes the aspect of education), infinite utopian possibility and ceaseless changes in socio-economic structures and cultural practices, towards increasing social equality.

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